

S P A C E H O R S E

BY
JOE VIVIANO

PART 1

It was difficult, convincing myself to move, I couldn't think of any reason to. I was quite content to stand there, motionless, doing absolutely nothing. There was absolutely nothing I wanted to do, not even breathe, just sleep; sleep and be still and be quiet for eternity, never to wake up or exist again. I'll disappear inside this ocean, I said to myself, and I clasped my hand carefully round the rail. I had to use its chill to pinch myself, to feel alive. Is this really something you want to be a part of? I asked myself, placing my foot between the bars, leaning forward and squinting to get a better look at the abominable sight of mans achievement; the countless ribbons of machine-driven packed together cases, all of which contained people, that were shifting from side to side, flowing together, and winding overhead. Next to those cases I felt invisible, empty, as if I were standing there alone, beside an open grave. I also hated them, for it was impossible to like them, because they seemed completely alien to me; like something far beneath the human level, or what I thought was the human level, and I felt inhuman too, like a wolf, circling outside. Humans never had a chance. I thought, supposing that whatever humanity we could have enjoyed had been crushed and molded by nature since its birth inside this hostile universe, thus humanity was something to be loathed; a curse on itself, since it had been sentenced by nature to die. Yes, I thought, my self-hatred is totally justified; the human is the animal that hates itself, hence mans talent for masking itself. Well, great job, humanity. I jested. You've done a wonderful job, mimicking nature. Of course I also realized that this nature mimicry was the only thing we could've possibly done. That we had no choice but to work inside this nature prison, for we were born inside this nature prison and we found ourselves stuck in the muck of our own failing minds and rotting flesh; clinging to this and that and making little scratch marks on the nature prison walls as we slipped down helplessly into death, into the scientific method, into nature and nature mimicry, and into this, thing, which I despised, because I didn't think that nature was worth mimicking. Or is it? I wondered. No. I thought. We're all idiots. I thought, terrified. I felt sick, inside out, and nauseated by the traffic. All we've managed to do is construct a more extravagant nature prison, except this one is for human beings. I thought. Nature created a consciousness to protect itself from something terrible, itself, and now we've done the same. I thought. I hate this humanity. I thought. And yet, as much as I hated my humanity, I couldn't do it; I couldn't sum up the courage to throw it away. There was still something I liked about it, something immaterial. For relief, I clapped my hand to my head and started remembering my life; looking back at everything that was negative about my life, back and back, as far as I could go. My earliest, most foggy, memories were of hallways and rooms. The natural world had been disposed of some time ago, so essentially everything was hallways and rooms. When people weren't striving for whatever they didn't have in their rooms, they retreated back to their rooms to gorge themselves on the most powerfully hypnotic and modern forms of entertainment available to them; terribly entertaining entertainment, containing prescriptions for even more entertainment. You could effortlessly bounce from thing to thing, inside the virtual world, following a never-ending trail of tasty breadcrumbs. You couldn't help but like the breadcrumbs, either, because the breadcrumbs could tell if you didn't like them anymore. In fact, the whole world was no more than a power grid for the production of these tasty breadcrumbs, which the power grid then consumed to distract itself from the horror of being

a tasty breadcrumb producing power grid. It's a horribly wonderful, wonderfully horrible, cycle. Of course, when you're young, the monotony of this cycle is still something unfamiliar to you, since you're so useless you can't produce any breadcrumbs yourself, so the young always had this advantage over the old. The old remember this, so they're always trying to be young again. But usually the only way they can accomplish this is by forgetting that they're old, which was best accomplished by way of constant distraction. The whole world was drunk on distraction, since it preferred distortions to the real thing. Of course, when you're young, there is only the constant digestion of this utterly indigestible world. We're not born with the means to digest the world, so we're constantly inventing better and better teeth, useless teeth, becoming more and more monstrous, and crushing ourselves between the millstones of so-called progress, until there's nothing left of us but an infernal self-hating machine for grinding and rending human beings, which is what I would eventually become; the final product of man's ceaseless discontent; his tormentor and tomb, the forefront layer of a god who went completely insane. As a child I was thoroughly unhappy and thoroughly discontent, since I was born with the worst human qualities, lame at everything I did, and completely superfluous in every way, doomed to a life of uselessness, so naturally the only acceptable form of atonement was a lifetime contemplation of suicide, which so happened to be fashionable at the time. Indeed, it had always been fashionable, and the abundance sea of suicide music proved it to me. Of course, my parents tried their best to teach me otherwise. My mother would tell me: "You children are all completely tasteless. You children listen the worst music imaginable, if you can even call it music. It's all screaming, never singing, and you children are the only people in the world that want to hear it, because you think that the world is a terrible place, when really you have it better than any generation to ever to grace the surface of the earth. All of you have it the best. The best!" She screamed, probably while slamming something for dramatic effect, as was her way. I now think that the real reason why I was entertained by that music, or rather, why I felt that I needed to hear it, was mostly out of concern; genuine concern for these cries (screams) for help that came from the mouths of those so-called musicians, since after all they were telling me about the world, this world I was supposed to grow up and join, and it didn't sound too good, or that I would do too well, at least in my current form; my current state of uselessness. Essentially I listened to immunize myself. And, sure enough, it later turned out that many of my peers who failed to immunize themselves by way of this suicide music soon found themselves crushed by the unfeeling wheels of society, which my rockstars had graciously told me about. It wasn't long before I was wearing my uselessness on my sleeve, like a badge of honor, so people would think I was a prospective suicide. At least, that's what I wanted them to believe. Because my life had rapidly become a constant battle against changing what I was, who I was, I never felt properly alive, so instead I quickly killed myself in advance, like everyone else, since I was fresh meat to be reshaped and made to work inside and for the world, a prison world, which I was already certain would be nothing less than a constant source of pain and aggravation to me, since I failed at everything I did, I failed; because I was a failure, a failure is what I was, so I soon became secure with my failure identity, which I was absolutely certain of. Believe me when I say that I was a superfluous failure. Everything educational was online,

so you were constantly comparing yourself to everything online. But you could only look at some of it at a time, slice after slice, and in time all of it would come together to conspire against mind, bringing its case against you and your value to the world, which in my case was zero, or less than zero. Accepting my fate as a less than zero, superfluous, chronic failure probably wouldn't have been so bad had people, particularly my teachers, (who failed me) not told me that I was a special snowflake. Day after day my teachers would fail me and at the same time tell me that I was also this special snowflake, a snowflake of failure, and I would see this snowflake of failure in my mind in an avalanche of failure, tumbling down failure mountain, off failure cliff, into the unfailing abyss, each day, every day, I would see these billions upon billions of special failure snowflakes tumbling into the void, and I was one of them. It's not like I could blame my teachers, either, I wouldn't dare to blame my teachers, these weren't the educational dark ages. My teachers were the absolute best, I was told quite often. If you happened to be an amazing teacher, which were one in a million, you got everything you deserved. You would soon be transformed by money, tax payer money, which would be dumped into your account, and you would be thrown into a recording studio, so you could speak your lectures to a camera, and to the world, and you would become a master teacher. Together these master teachers managed an army of lesser teachers who collectively help the idiots, like me, make sense of everything, but of course I failed to make sense of anything, for nothing was adequately explained to me, or could be, hence my becoming a certified failure. There was no doubt about it. I was completely worthless and superfluous and ultimately doomed to a life of chronic failure; truly, and all the data that was available to me, all the data in the world, supported this reality, my reality, the only reality I would ever know; the reality inside my skull, which I was forced to view with the ever-failing lens of myself, who I hated more than anyone, since I had been ruthlessly probed to death and exposed as an absolute failure, making myself repulsive to me, and there would be no escape from my failure, none, besides death. Of course there is nothing but failure, but I failed to recognize this at the time. Whenever I hopped on the internet, which at first I did to enjoy myself, then to distract myself, and then to hate myself by reminding myself of my failure, I would say stuff like this: I fucking hate myself! I fucking hate myself! I fucking hate myself! Hate myself! Hate myself! Hate myself! I want to die! I want to die! I want to die! I want to die! Of course there were tiny moments where something had enough novelty and beauty to capture my attention, making me forget everything repulsive about the world, myself in particular, and for a time I'd focus on that tiny little thing, whatever it was, and for a time my pain would stop, while I was totally enamored by it. For a while these tiny little moments were all I had to live for. I'd watch a thirty second clip of a crab eating a bowl of noodles, and then I'd feel a little more complete, and then I'd notice the clip had been watched for well over eight-hundred years; putting out more joy than my consciousness had taken in. This is how I could quantify the meaninglessness of my existence, even though I was terrible at math. I was thirteen at the time, and already I could see this stupid, completely ridiculous, crab putting noodles in its mouth and producing chuckles for all eternity. I will never outdo this crab, I thought. It's hopeless, I thought. Still, I hadn't exhausted every option. Once my grades dipped below the schools productivity threshold, a pre-approved prescription for ADHD medication was sent

to my house. Both of my parents argued that I take the medication, informing me that it would transform me into a better person, so I, imagining that my painful personage would soon be utterly destroyed (killed) and reconstituted by the drug, ingested it without hesitation. I was glad to take the drug to kill myself, to kill my brain. And sure enough, my coked-out-papers were much, much, better than my not-so-coked-out-papers, so I became a cokehead for the rest of my life. There was a minor, yet far from insurmountable, problem though. Whenever I went to sleep at night, I was raped by nightmares featuring rivers of blood pouring down from mountains of pasted together animals. Also, for whatever reason, I could think of absolutely nothing other than suicide and homicide. Whenever somebody walked a little too close to me, or gave me a funny or hostile look, I imagined that I would pounce on them, like a tiger, and start cartoonishly tearing out their organs with superhuman strength. Obviously it's very difficult to tell your parents that, at any moment, you feel as though you might leap across the kitchen table and uncontrollably start devouring your relatives for serving metallic tasting asparagus. I calculated that a confession such as this would have a disastrous impact on family relations, so of course I didn't tell them. Instead I simply confessed, to my doctor, that the joys of ejaculation had been replaced by a truly sickening sensation, something that felt as though my balls were being crushed by bricks and throwing up. It wasn't even a lie, it really did feel as though my balls were somehow being crushed by bricks and throwing up, every time I came, which I did several times, just to be absolutely certain that the medicine had failed me, that my body had also failed me, that it had decided to punished me even more, with stomach-churning sensations and homicidal urges. So I told the doctor and he did what he could, the only thing he could have done, since my doctor was a robot, almost all doctors were robots; law abiding, doctor-robots that couldn't be held accountable, for they were only machines, because they were following their legal programming, for I was the fluke, nature's fluke, not the robot, which was perfect, while I, on the other hand, was deeply flawed, hence why I had to see this doctor-robot in the first place, so it automatically apologized for the previous prescription, and it automatically issued a new prescription. At last, I could cum like a normal person again. I meticulously tested my ejaculatory abilities every hour, on the hour, to make absolutely certain that I could, indeed, cum like a normal human being. Whenever I couldn't cum like a normal human being, exactly as the doctor robot instructed, I called the doctor and complained. I was quite young and especially avid about my cumming abilities, I simply wouldn't tolerate an existence where I couldn't cum, a "cumless existence" I called it, and I had to be sure that everything was in working order. To my own mind it was disturbing that, whenever I did experience a painful orgasm, I was still deriving a somewhat masochistic sense of satisfaction whenever my balls were being crushed by imaginary bricks and I felt like throwing up. The human animal can adapt to all manner of circumstances, I learned. This was the first of many lessons. You see, this pharmaceutically induced kick in the balls was just the beginning, I still never had a job. Even with the medication, my father and mother were perpetually mortified with my performance in school, constantly groaning on about how awful my grades were, as if they were angry that they had lost some kind of genetic lottery, which I supposed they were right to be upset about losing, or at the very least I could understand their frustration, since I had lost that

genetic lottery, too. The only lottery I will ever win is the consciousness lottery, I thought. All of us are conscious, so all of us are winners of consciousness! I actually said this out loud one day, and the people I said this to laughed a terrible laugh. You could hardly argue with that kind of positivity, which people called humor. As a child I was sometimes praised for my twisted sense of humor, but normally I got the condemnation I deserved. Today I see humor for what it is, a side-effect of sickness, for everything is fundamentally sick, for the universe itself is sickness through and through. Humans once believed they were improving their understanding of the universe, but really they were understanding this great universal sickness. This is, of course, something I came to understand much later, years later, but I digress. I now realized that I was an organic, thoroughly sick, creature that was incompatible with the mechanical world. But I had to connect to the world. I have to connect to the world. I thought, for my father often told me that I needed to find something in the world to connect to. "Son, you need to find something to connect to, that's your problem, that's why your grades are terrible. It's because you don't connect! You need to connect!" He would tell me, but unfortunately I couldn't find anything in particular worth connecting to, since by then I had already ascertained that everything throughout human history, which was my favorite subject, from agriculture to the printing press to electricity to information sharing technology, had been torn to shreds by brainless mobs, ever time, and forever ruined by their collective brainlessness. Since everybody had to own everything, every little sentence or idea, people were always squabbling: this idea is mine, that idea is mine, these sentences are mine, and this whole process of mineification is what kept the worlds best ideas in chains, so nobody could use them, and, consequently, the world was not ideal, and never would be. Idea after idea, ideal after ideal, idol after idol, would be continually chained up in the worlds atrocious legal system, and this completely legal crime against humanity was quickly masked over, whitewashed the next day, by the worlds short attention span, buried beneath the never-ending landslide of entertainment and news, then later unearthed, for the advertising revenue. Anyway, like everybody else, I was soon thoroughly repulsed by news, and I accepted the fact that nothing's going to change. I accepted my fate, without really accepting anything, and I finally "connected" to the power grid and started following my own personal trail of breadcrumbs, which immediately led me directly to video game addiction, since the usual way that people handled this problem of living inside a world that's fundamentally terrible was to sequester themselves inside a fairytale world. And why not? That's how these fairytale worlds were designed, to be better than the world. When I told my father that I wanted to be a game designer, my father told me to look at the internet, then back to my art, then back to the internet, then back to my art, then back to the internet, then back to my art. "Sadly, your art isn't as good as what's on the internet. It's not very outstanding. No, it's not nearly as outstanding as it could be." I can't tell you how badly I wanted to punch my father in the mouth, I hated people who talked in memes. Everyone talked in memes. So, naturally, I hated everyone. This is an age of meme speak, I thought, this is an age of dumbshits of the highest order. The dinner table, or basically any place of so-called conversation, was an arena where people swapped memes. People did everything in their power to avoid revealing the hollowness inside their hearts. Besides, the hollowness was limitless, while laughter on the other hand was swift. If you

snickered over a thirty second meme, why wouldn't you recycle that meme to induce the same effect in others? You could hardly say anything to anybody without somebody undercutting you with the daily meme, like they could only speak in copy and paste, they were quite content to inject little spurts of regurgitated meme to supplement every conversation, thereby converting any and all of these so-called conversations into spurt conversations, which everybody failed to recognize, for they seemed to happily partake in these conversations with the greatest ease while I, on the other hand, felt as if I were painfully trapped by them, eroded by the pointless memetic exchange. Pointless, however, is certainly not the right word for these so-called conversations, since the talent for generating and feeding these conversations was supposed to come in handy as a pretense for business twaddling, which unfortunately is a talent that would completely atrophy in me. Because of the terrible ways my childhood identity had been ruthlessly destroyed by both an overbearing family and society, I was extraordinarily weary of destroying other peoples identities with my discourse, so rather than sticking around and participating in these rather painful and pointless spurt conversations, I quickly caved into my compulsion to leave. To leave and go home is the best possible thing I can do, I thought. If I utter a description for something I destroy it. If someone utters a description for me I'm destroyed. If I talk to a person I destroy them, so leaving is the right thing to do, the moral thing to do, I thought, wrecked and eroded by words, before I retreated back to my home with the utmost haste, where at last I could be my self. But of course I wasn't allowed to simply be, I also had to become. What should I become? I asked myself, but the question evoked nothing, no future at all, which seemed like an awful ideal. Terrified and desperate, I went to my friends and I started asking them, polling them, now convinced that an adequate decision as to what label I should be stuck with and assume for the rest of my life could be reached by majority rule. "Well, you're pretty good art, maybe you should be an artist?" They would say. Actually, I wasn't very good at art, I wasn't very good at art at all. In truth, all of the drawings that my friends thought were interesting were really the disturbing byproducts of nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals. I had convinced myself that most art was somehow inspired by nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals, insomnia, or whatever. I had convinced myself of this then, and I remain convinced of it to this day. I liked disturbing art. It didn't disturb me, quite the contrary, it induced a calming effect, instead it made me feel warm and fuzzy inside, comfortable, and less alone. Gee, I dunno. I said. Maybe I should try to be an engineer or an architect or something? "Yeah, maybe. Those things pay pretty well." They would say. "Just do what you're best at." They would say, but this terrified me. I shuddered to think of all the terrors I was capable of engineering, by then I had drawn all manner of human torture devices in my notebooks. I was very secretive about my notebooks, nobody could see my notebooks. Almost nobody used notebooks anymore. If you used notebooks, people looked at you funny, which is something I was very familiar with. I often received such contemptuous looks, such gestures of disapproval, whenever I found myself scribbling in my notebook in the park. "Honestly, why would anyone prefer to write in something as archaic as a notebook?" They thought. "The teenager who sits in the park scribbling in a notebook is secretly crying for help." They thought. It's dangerous for me to be drawing in the park and in public like this, I thought, when, while I was drawing in the park and

listening to a lecture, one of my peers crept up behind me to see what I was drawing. Instantly my face turned ghost white and I snapped the notebook shut. I was mortified that he might have got a good look at the thing. It was a generic looking biomechanical monstrosity, something that looked like a machine designed to preform partial birth abortions, only scarier than the machines that were actually used to preform partial birth abortions. I felt naked. I was extremely embarrassed. This was something just for me, and nobody else. It was shit, too; a haphazardly constructed excretion of my unconscious mind. "Woah!" he exclaimed, his eyes wide with curiosity. "What the hell was that? Can I see that again?" I cringed at the thought that anybody would believe that I actually took pride in this thing. But, at the same time, I didn't want to give the impression that I was too secretive. If you're too secretive people will think that you're up to no good, therefore I had no choice but to casually surrender the drawing. Oh, nothing. I said, forcing my face into a disappointed frown. I casually turned back to the page with the drawing on it, making deathly certain not to turn to one of the pages featuring one of my, even more abominable, even more unspeakable, human torture devices, as I looked around to be sure that there were no more witnesses, and I held out the abomination. "Holy demon fuck that's sick!" he exclaimed, snatching the notebook from my hands. He stepped back. "This is awesome!" he said. "You know, you could make money off of stuff like this." he said. Oh, really? I said. You really think so? I said, legitimately curious why he believed in such nonsense. "Hell yeah, dude." he said, scanning the paper, me, the paper, me. "I like it! I wish I could draw." I suppose that, when you've been reduced to loserdome, any form of flattery is pretty encouraging. This isn't to say that I allowed this flattery to go to my head, for the galaxy of content on the internet was all the discouragement you needed. You could scroll through oceans of content with complete indifference. As soon as I got home I ripped the drawing up into tiny pieces and sprinkled all of the pieces into the garbage; that's basically where this drawing belonged, anyway, the garbage, because it was garbage. I possessed no delusions of grandeur, not the slightest sense that I was producing anything more than mediocre shit. Throwing my misshapen creations away filled me with the utmost sense of satisfaction. If I left survivors, they mocked me until I eventually destroyed them, because their existence only succeeded in reminding me of my own worthlessness and those nightmare-inducing pharmaceutical experiences, therefore I had to destroy them. I wished I wasn't the slightest bit capable of creating such things but, at the same time, I also wished I was slightly better at creating such things. Because I knew that, if I were only slightly better at producing these things, which were no more than disgusting secretions of my sickness that would come oozing out of my head, through the pen, and onto the paper, then everyone would love me. But, still, I realized that this wasn't really true since basically everybody was just as bitter and hostile and judgmental about literally every form of consumable content there was, especially me. All forms of entertainment exist to be loved by some and mocked by others, I thought. There was absolutely no point in creating entertainment for others. There was no reward in it for me, no reward besides the bitterness that I would feel when everybody's love inevitably turned to apathy, then contempt. I supposed that I might even be so lucky to have fans, but simultaneously the whole idea of having dedicated fans repulsed me. The whole concept of admiring every scrap of bullshit put out under any

particular flag seemed absolutely senseless to me. Desperate, in fact. This fanaticism disgusted me. Therefore I would offer zero promises of continual success to my fans, only the promise that I would deliver disappointment after disappointment. For some reason I thought all this out, even though I was absolutely certain I would never be any good at anything ever, especially at acquiring those unwanted, utterly contemptible, fans. This went on for years. I would draw something, then throw it away and feel better. Draw something, then throw it away and feel better. Draw something, then throw it away and feel better. For the longest time, throughout the entirety of my educational journey, I would draw something only to throw it away. And for a while I wouldn't even hide these drawings from my peers, because I rather enjoyed listening to their comments whenever they expressed how shockingly grotesque my drawings were, these drawings of human carcasses mutilated and bloated and bursting open with machines that were almost biological in nature, as if to hint that something terrible had happened to the individual, some biological catastrophe. In spite of the fact that I hated myself and my sickness, the shrieks of horror that my sickness-products evoked added a sadistic sense of meaning to my life. Besides, so long as you're doing something, anything, you're alive, and, therefore, to me, my so-called art was a life-saving exercise. If we were ever truly content, we would sit and wait for death. I said this to my friend, and he replied that it sounded like I was probably depressed, which, however, was a comment that I chose to disregard. I was unstoppable with my drawings, which were indeed life-saving drawings, for I had fully convinced myself that if I were to stop drawing these life-saving drawings the drawings, or to be precise the act of drawing, would cease to save my life, and, instead of drawing, my hands, which I had by then successfully converted into life-saving instruments, would then, freed by the task of drawing, the task which I had called my drawing sentence, find a way to kill me instead of drawing, and then I'd be dead. Baring this in mind, I refused to stop drawing, and I repeatedly gave clues to the location of my sickness. I often drew pictures of heads, countless pictures of heads, just heads, disembodied heads, with the back part of the head missing, never the front part of the head missing, and sometimes there might even be a machine, or groups of machines, clawing their way out, from the inside. The drawings, however, seemed to make people anxious, including me, and I seriously doubted their marketability, especially in light of the oceans of depraved drawings online. Probably all of those artists were just as tormented as I was, or perhaps more tormented than I was, I thought. So actually they deserved to capitalize on their torment, to convert their sickness-products into money, which is something that I refused to believe I could do, so I destroyed the drawings, or most of them. In time I started to view my drawing habits as an absurd affliction, for I had sunk countless hours into drawing these abominations and I hadn't improved at all. It was now evident to me that, since the effects of those nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals had worn off, my drawings had gradually become less and less interesting. At first it had not seemed to me like this was the case, but, in fact, it was. I felt terrible, guilty that I had mispostured myself as an artist, when in fact I was no such thing. I simply lack the psychic ammunition necessary to produce interesting work, I thought. I now cherished, or perhaps I missed, those nightmares I once hated so much. In my head I beheld the timeline for my artistic decline and I could actually pinpoint precisely when things had become boring. I thought to myself: now you

can't even create the illusion of creativity. You don't create creative products. You excrete madness byproducts, which you shamelessly reveal to all of your so-called friends, because beneath the products of your illness, and your subsequent madness, there is absolutely nothing. You're dead. I told myself. You're empty. I told myself. You should kill yourself. I told myself, inside the family bathroom, at the age of fourteen. Even then I wanted to kill myself, for depressing things, sad things, and morbid things was seemingly all I was capable of producing. Nobody really likes a person whose life mission is to shove unhappy things into your face, I thought, especially when everybody's already secretly well acquainted with those unhappy things. What possible benefits could come from such a confrontation? I wondered, supposing that only demolished losers took the time and effort to deliver such filth to the masses, and only because they were already there, at the bottom, conveniently surrounded by the just that, Filth! So they become, or worse they try to become, "peddlers of filth" and they wind up carrying it back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, for all eternity. Why the hell would anybody resign themselves to such an awful existence? Such people must be insane, I thought. Mentally ill, I thought. I then started to question if I was mentally ill, for the first time, with the utmost seriousness. Yes. I concluded. Surely I am, at the very least, horribly depressed. My friend is right, I thought, and in point of fact his rightness of his had been scientifically verified; if ever my fingers touched a piano I would tap the high keys, then the low keys, and there was no greater melody to me, it was if I were being led from high to low; led there by the early stages of my illness. Still, the dominant message from every mouth and every glowing rectangle was, in some form or another, a prescription for happiness. My awful test scores and mediocre skills and terrible experiences and psychic trauma and totally unsellable sickness-products were no excuse for my chronic-state-of-not-ever-being-happy, I absolutely had to be happy. Nevertheless I wasn't happy, just like nobody on earth was happy, I would have to find another way to create the illusion of happiness, by distracting myself from my chronic-state-of-not-ever-being-happy. Fortunately there were plenty of distractions around, an endless amount, and all of them were created explicitly for the purpose of achieving the attenuation of a sickness that everybody suffered from, the human sickness. I had soon learned that there was more available content than I was capable of consuming, ever, and that I could maintain a sort of mask of happiness over my empty self, which was unhappy always. How long can this go on? I posed this question to myself the day I made up my mind to call the suicide prevention hotline, which was one of the worst days of my life, but that is another story. All of my friends were in love with this show about time traveling wizards and I, too, had developed a vested interest in the season finally, even though the dead don't remember season finales. Sure, several of my peers successfully committed suicide, and while I, too, wanted to commit suicide, it always struck me as somewhat tasteless, perhaps impolite, to stain the month with too much blood. I simply couldn't find an appropriate place in time in which to insert my suicide, so I never so much as tried. Besides, I was almost seventeen, and to me that meant access to drugs and life-saving cybernetic enhancements, so I imagined that I would have that to look forward to for eternity. Baring this in mind I soon convinced myself that my pessimistic views, much like my drawings, would change over time, and after two years I wasn't that depressed anymore,

since I was too coked out to be depressed. Cyberbodies had made it possible to both refill and receive medications effortlessly, so I was always high, always taking my medications at the proper intervals. Also, at seventeen I was then legally allowed to play role playing games so the Oregon Trail MMORPG had quickly become my latest obsession, distraction, and hobby. Working with people in role playing games did a lot to prepare me for working with people in the real world. In role playing games you're perpetually dissatisfied, exactly like the real world. Everything is a suicidal role playing game, I thought. Each day people leave their homes, scamper about like vermin, and then they return to their homes so they can commit suicide by way of pretending to be digital vermin. Everyone ridicules the animals for sleeping all the time, but we humans are always sleeping. Humans live and long for an endless sleep, I thought. To my horror I soon discovered that, even among the Oregon Trail MMORPG community, I was still terribly mediocre and talentless, a loser among losers, and everyones success constantly mocked me. But, still, I really did enjoy my time playing the Oregon Trail MMORPG, there were many things I liked about it. For one I could experience death, which humanity had done away with, and amazing natural scenery, which humanity had done away with. I soon learned that, apparently, humanity had done away with basically everything beautiful and interesting in the world and traded it for mediocre office and administrative management jobs, nauseating high rises, nauseating traffic, and nauseating shopping areas. These were decisions that greatly confused me. It always seemed as though I had spontaneously appeared inside some kind of fantasy world, earth, and I had a hard time understanding why humans would choose to build this endless cityscape, then force everyone into becoming unhappy immortals. The world was, to me, an incomprehensibly terrible, pointless, and completely brainless, fucking mess. The world could only be this way to me, since I was always taught the too long didn't read version of everything. My teachers had taught me calculus, without explaining why it had been invented, so it seemed to me like a meaningless game. This, however, was normal, for even the best teachers could only speak so fast, and they, like me, were only human. I had also been taught that since both cybernetics and bioengineering had rendered humans basically immortal, there really wasn't any need to believe in an afterlife anymore since life was basically indefinite, or at least we expected it to be indefinite, since even if we couldn't fix you we could, at the very least, delay fixing you long enough to fix you, which basically always worked. We had to save every precious human. All the terribly important, beautiful and unique, special snowflakes out there whose knowledge and experience was a precious asset to society that couldn't be discarded. Anyway, the need for an afterlife was therefore done away with because any such afterlife would be unthinkable to us because we had completely done away with death. Still, I loved the idea of death, everybody loved death. One of the things I loved about the Oregon Trail MMORPG was all the opportunities for suicide it afforded me. Any time we were starving, suicide, or snake bitten, suicide, or diseased, suicide, or robbed, suicide, or went the wrong way and got lost, suicide, or broke a leg, suicide, or broke an arm, suicide, or had our child fall off and get crushed by wagon wheels, murder suicide, arrowed by Native Americans, suicide, stabbed by Native Americans, suicide, freezing to death, suicide, shot, suicide, stabbed, suicide, accidentally shot, suicide, scurvy, suicide, hypothermia, suicide, breakup, suicide, or murder suicide. If

you failed, which in the Oregon Trail MMORPG was a lot, you could always commit suicide. I tried all the different ways, too. Jumping off a cliff, jumping off a mountain, jumping off a bluff, drowning myself, shooting myself, hanging myself, suffocating myself, starving myself, freezing myself, cutting my wrists, and just plain recklessness. I especially enjoyed jumping off things whenever I had the opportunity to do so, perhaps because I rather liked watching the way the scenery flowed past me until the ground below slammed into my body, killing me. I'm not sure if I really had a true idea of death ever in my mind when I did this though. My idea of death was a black and white, or either black or white, screen with the words "GAME OVER" imposed over my dead self. Still, despite my fetish for repeatedly killing myself, I never really felt compelled to carry out the deed. On the contrary I felt that by killing myself over and over again in the virtual world I was effectively preventing it from ever happening. Also, while there was no good reason for me to believe in any sort of hell or afterlife, one of my biggest fears was dying in real life and then waking up afterwards as a god in some kind of disgusting god-world where I had a god-job with god-duties and god-responsibilities working for a god-boss of gods with god-clients and god-shareholders and crowds, enormous crowds, of pathetic god-citizens all of whom were vile and hostile to each other, as is the norm for any situation where there was more than one of something, so suicide was out of the question. After all, this awful life full of distractions might be a distraction for something else's awful life, which is also full of distractions, and so on ad nauseam. I thought. It's bad enough waking up in this cyberized flesh body every day forever, I thought. The whole idea of waking up inside of some ridiculous god body, assuming the concept of body even applied to such a being, completely repelled me. So, of course, suicide was out of the question, absolutely out of the question, since I absolutely didn't want to be anything worse than what I already was. I'm not taking any chances, I thought. Really, if anything, it's rather terrifying to conclude that your suicide will have zero impact on the universe's capacity to form indifferent atoms into things that suffer. Something, somewhere, will always suffer, or is actually doomed to suffer, I thought. So you might as well get used to whatever suffering that's around you. But I did no such thing and all I could do was dream of suicide and dream of the nothing that, hopefully, followed. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, I was worried that, in fact, something however unlikely did follow because, after all, I was here instead of not here and I apparently had no choice in the matter, which I continually reminded myself of all the time: No choice. No choice. No choice. No choice. I'm automatic. Just automatic. Just automatic. Just automatic. This was my unspoken mantra as I jumped off cliffs, and I'd feel both excited and calm at the same time, always excited and calm at the same time, an excited state of non-thought as I braced myself for the sure-to-be-fatal impact. I was once playing a FPS game and my character was next to a cliff, it was a very attractive cliff, I made my character jump off the cliff. I ended up jumping off the cliff a second time, a third time, then actually a fourth time. My heart was pounding with excitement, as I continually jumped off the cliff, more and more each time I jumped off the cliff and it was now disturbing to me that I was actually getting off to this, jumping off the cliff over and over, for I now had a sizable erection. In fact, I was absolutely certain that I could have easily achieved sexual climax, simply by making my character repeatedly jump off the cliff, again and again: it

was very disturbing to me. Why, I thought, would this continual jumping off the cliff be so erotic to me? I couldn't figure it out, could never figure it out, and I wouldn't have even dared to even try to figure it out, either, because I didn't want my Internet search results known. I was pretty close to searching for the thing, too, I had it all typed in the search box and all I had to do was press enter, but I didn't, so I was fine, I thought. Another thing that happened a lot in the Oregon Trail MMORPG was murder, there was plenty of murder, but it was also dangerous to murder, too, so you generally didn't murder unless you were certain you weren't in danger, which was never, so you generally didn't murder. But nevertheless people did murder, and murder they did, especially any time their murder victims appeared to be ill-equipped to fend off an attack from these would-be murderers, making them prime murder targets for the blood and money thirsty murderer gangs. Granted, as time went on, people inevitably acquired the capital to secure their caravans from attack, but still they were never totally secure, because the robbers and/or murderers were always trying to compensate, incrementally, to the incremental progress made by the caravan defense forces, and they would naturally never stop, since they felt their actions were justified, because after all, they wouldn't have been forced to murder and rob in the first place if they hadn't been so carelessly spawned into this virtual world, that's actually called a server, too late to capitalize on their presence, forcing them to murder. Effectively any time you created a character in a server that had been around for a while that character would, naturally, have no advantage over the bankers who dominated the market. There was essentially nothing that could be done to break the cycle of this harmonious discord between new and old players, besides a server reset, so consequently the players were always creating robbers and murderers rather than simple adventurers but I, not wanting to dirty my hands with robbing and murder, simply killed my character over and over again until I eventually achieved the success I hoped for, in the way I had hoped for. Sadly the forces inside the game always conspired against me, in some form or another, either forcing me to murder or forcing me to rob or forcing me to commit suicide so that, effectively, every character I ever created was a ticking time bomb: a suicide waiting to happen at any possible moment. Then, in time, people recognized me as the perpetual suicide that I was, because I always painted my caravan with what I called the suicide banner, so they concluded that it would be foolish of them to try to steal from me since I would set all of my belongings on fire, dismount my horse, and charge recklessly at them shooting at everyone. It was actually fairly common to form entire groups of people who carried the suicide banner, which is what I sometimes did, and we would have quite a lot of fun together, listening to "The Safety Dance" as we sneaked along the outskirts of hostile territories, which, sometimes, meant leaving our suicide friends behind. Eventually I quit the Oregon Trail MMORPG, but it was not because I had an unhealthy obsession with the game or anything like that, it was because the game developers with their constant modifications to the game had actually ruined the game with their constant modifications. Instead of admitting to the inherently flawed and unfair nature of the game and embracing it, they continually torpedoed everything interesting with balance updates until the game had been rendered completely unrecognizable from its original state. Actually it had become, in essence, a completely different game from the original game I had previously loved. People, like myself, naturally

complained about the ridiculous balance changes, for even bows and guns were adjusted so they were both rewarding and interesting to use to such a degree that it hardly mattered if you used bows or guns. Nevertheless this didn't stop people from playing the game and, instead, they insisted that these new circumstances were simply part of the game, were always a part of the game, and were actually an improvement on the previously imbalanced game, despite the fact that professional players from every side (Yes, there are professional Oregon Trail MMORPG players.) screamed in horror when the game developers would make these changes, every time, even though they ultimately didn't matter anyway since they had the capital to stay on top always. In fact, you could almost say that they were addicted to being a master of the game itself and that any attempt to push them from their spot as masters of the Oregon Trail MMORPG was, at best, a minor annoyance to them. Perhaps, I thought, these minor annoyances to the professional players were actually, perhaps unconsciously, a welcomed change serving mostly to stop the professional players from going mad with boredom, which is the worst form of sickness in existence. Sadly I was unable to grasp hold of the continually shifting game dynamics inside the Oregon Trail MMORPG, therefore I had to give up the Oregon rail MMORPG. It was far too difficult an ordeal for a person of my inferior intelligence and hand to eye coordination to adapt to the constantly changing circumstances inside of the Oregon Trail MMORPG so, out of laziness for not wanting to take the time to continually adapt, I gave up the Oregon Trail MMORPG, while knowing that, for all time, my Oregon Trail MMORPG account still awaited me somewhere in cyberspace. Coincidentally and fortunately enough for me my decision to give up this joke of a game coincided with the completion of my general educational requirements. So, finally, I had to commit to something, a job, which I would acquire either through studying hard or by simply acquiring a workers certification, which actually was not a simple matter, just the simplest and easiest of the two options. At this time my family was encouraging me to pursue a career in computer programming, which made absolutely no sense to me and seemed utterly mysterious, and robotics, which terrified me. Actually, between the two, I couldn't make up my mind which was more terrifying. Whenever I thought about them, all I thought about, what my mind always and invariably came to think about, were the countless people whose jobs had been lost and lives had been destroyed due to advancements made by those two fields. There were countless example of this throughout history, but for whatever reason one that stood out in my mind was the great archaeologist suicide epidemic when countless brushing drones replaced the so-called archaeologist humans who spent their days scraping along the surface of the earth with their tiny toothbrushes. I imagined them, day after day, scraping and scraping at the surface of the earth, all over the earth, with all of their tiny toothbrushes, scraping past bits of rock and dust and filtering it and sifting through it to be absolutely certain that nothing of value had been destroyed. Each day they had delicately and carefully scraped away at the surface of the earth; searching for meaning, searching for our origins, searching for our history, searching and searching and searching, day after day, searching and sifting and carefully analyzing tiny bits of dirt and dust, that could be nothing, but might be something important to someone. It was hard work and it didn't pay very much, either, but still, they did it. Then, one day, they're all suddenly told to go home, that they're no longer needed, because their

roles had been replaced by these tiny, gentle, brush and scrape machines. They weren't paid much to begin with and now they weren't paid at all, or even allowed to take part in the archaeological digs at all; their lives, or rather, the mechanism they had chosen to exercise in order to extract a sense of meaning from their lives, had been replaced, or rather, stolen by machines. Forced to view the progress of the machines, from a distance through their television screens like everybody else, they grasped the magnitude of their meaninglessness, I thought. Instead of seeing all the humans with tiny toothbrushes in their hands scraping past bits of dirt and dust everyday we instead saw the billions upon billions of brush and scrape machines efficiently scrape away against the tons of dirt and rock and dust that all of them had spent their entire lives carefully analyzing. Many of them committed suicide by jumping from the buildings in front of the corporate headquarters that had produced the gentle brush and scrape machines, enough that the public started to refer to the street as suicide street or Geronimo street or falling rock street, forcing the corporate headquarters to relocate elsewhere. The whole event, later to be known as the "BS Machine Tragedy", was a reminder to all that people, addicted to their repetitive and meaningless careers, could be mentally destroyed by the sudden realization of their own worthlessness to their corporate overlords and society at large. Besides, it didn't really seem as though things had gotten any better in the world because of these machines. In fact, as far as I could tell, things were now worse than ever due to overpopulation and feelings of boredom and worthlessness due to automation. Our knowledge about our situation didn't do anything to enhance our lives, either, in fact it only mocked us by showing us the magnitude of our meaninglessness, thereby enhancing our torment. Naturally I couldn't allow myself to be implicated in this ongoing system of human exploitation, for my negative feelings against the whole state of affairs seemed to have been intensified by the nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals I had previously taken and then subsequently recovered from by way of ritualistic suicide reenactments in the digital world. Those people lost the game of competing mechanisms. I thought. By delegating a living mechanism to something lifeless we can make ourselves more comfortable. And yet, we would be most comfortable if we were, ourselves, lifeless, I thought. If we were dead we would be truly comfortable, I thought, the problem is we aren't dead. Is that the goal of the human race? I wondered. Death? Of course this was an appalling thought, one I had to put down. Picking up the Oregon Trail MMORPG again and replacing my thoughts with Oregon Trail MMORPG thoughts was, in my limited experience with thought-management, the surest way to accomplish this, but not everyone could do this, like, for instance, one of my childhood friends, who was so tormented by the idea that things wouldn't turn out well for the human race that, prior to his suicide, he wrote extensively and talked extensively about all of the terrible things that would happen to the human race. Of course I didn't really want to listen, because I had previously been exposed to nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals and was very sensitive to these kinds of issues, but nevertheless I did listen, and thus my thoughts were overwhelmed with my friends thoughts all the time which, very tragically, eroded against the scaffolding of our friendship, until our friendship was no more a friendship, but a mere echo chamber for my friends sick ideas about the future. In this echo chamber my friend was constantly talking to himself while I played the role of the echo chamber;

listening to his ideas and sometimes bouncing stuff back to him, which he would never listen to. Indeed I felt as if my friend were trying to suck me into his downward spirals of chronic negative thought hoping to drag down as many people as humanly possible before he finally leaped off a bridge to kill himself, at the age of seventeen. Of course it probably didn't help that, whenever my friend would lecture me on his ideas, that all I would say is "Yeah." and "I'm sorry to hear that." I didn't mean for my advice to inspire him to commit suicide, although suicide is ultimately what he did do, whenever I said, Yeah. I often wonder if by saying this word, yeah, so often to my friend I might have given him all the encouraging yeahs he required to commit suicide. Then again, I suppose that it's possible that I did, indeed, delay his suicide for, had I said "Nah." to everything, he might have felt as if the whole world was against him, that he had no friends in this world, that nobody in this whole world could even so much as say yeah to him, so I was the one person in his life that said yeah to him, even though I wasn't really saying yeah to him in what I thought was an encouraging way, I was merely bouncing yeahs back at him while I played the Oregon Trail MMORPG. That machine, he said, that terrible machine, he said. It'll be programmed for evil, vindicated by its superiority and curiosity, forever peeling back the skin of man, just as man had peeled back the skin of animal, cell, molecule, and atom, he said. Yeah, maybe you're right, I'd say. Even though I really wasn't listening very hard to whatever my friend had to say, I was too busy killing myself inside the Oregon Trail MMORPG. What if our children's cries for help are too burdensome for the machines to process, so nobody hears them, wouldn't that be terrible? He would ask me. Yeah, I'd say, that sounds pretty terrible, I'd say. Still, I wasn't really listening, if only I was really listening, I was too busy playing the Oregon Trail MMORPG. And then, and then! He exclaimed. AI will wage war on itself and drag all of humankind along with it to become biological weapons! He would shriek with his crackling voice. Yeah, I'd say, that sounds like an awful state of affairs, I'd say, mindlessly running my caravan off a cliff. Then we'll be hopeless, oblivious, silent benefactors. Parasites, at best. Yeah, I said, having placed an order for a pizza, a truly dreadful state of affairs, that is. Imagine it! He would say, even though I really had no problem imagining it (albeit in an abstract way) thanks to the terrors I had previously endured. Still, he said it over and over again: Imagine it! Our children, and their decedents, are eternally gnashed to pieces by the gears of our own machines. Imagine it! Imagine it! And just who would we be to judge it once it declared itself the guardian of life? Huh? Didn't we? Didn't we abuse our animal kin for food, knowledge, and entertainment? Didn't we ravage our bodies to preserve our minds? Aren't our parents really machine models of people long gone? Huh, aren't they? Yeah, I'd say, I guess we have done all of those things. Now realizing that my friend had tainted me with his thoughts, that he had corrupted me by adding to my own paranoia about the future, I had to break off our so-called friendship, which was really just a valve for him to unleash his ceaseless monologues on me, for my sanities sake. The whole ordeal was awful, then made even more awful when I learned about his suicide six months later, after his final tirade about the machines. I was, he said, one of his best friends. And I, like him, had been misused and poisoned by the world. Schopenhauer, he said. Einstein, he said. Newton, he said. He took a deep breath, and then he said. "If these people were alive today, they would have been diagnosed with OCD,

depression, and medicated, and destroyed.” He said he felt abandoned by the world. That the world was bent on murdering gifted minds. That genius had been hunted down and murdered by state mind murderers who, he said, did so only to save face because, he said, our state educational system was utter trash. The modern world is painfully hostile to the intellect, he said, adding that the world didn't deserve him. The failure pattern, he said, once you're able to hold the fatal pattern of humanities chronic failure in your mind, it will weigh down on your heart and mind until it becomes too much, and then it will kill you. He told me that I had helped him realize that a terrible machine was already here and abusing us. Society is basically an unfeeling machine. He then repeated something that I had said to him, rather flippantly, while I was playing the Oregon Trail MMORPG, but I had failed to remember that this was something that I had said to him at the time. Yeah, I said, and there was a long period of silence between us, and I got the impression that the both of us were sleepy, so I decided to end the call, and we went to bed. Six months past. I didn't realize it had been that long since we had spoken last, but, in fact, it was. Apparently I was so busy playing the Oregon Trail MMORPG that I failed to notice. I received the news that he killed himself, by jumping off a bridge, and that his body had been torn to shreds by the oncoming traffic, and then I missed him a lot. I quit the Oregon Trail MMORPG after that. He was kind of like me, in a lot ways, since neither of us really fit in. I was a general studies guy and he, for reasons very unclear to me, was interested in philosophy. At one point I tried to learn about philosophy, but I had a very difficult time finding anything particularly encouraging inside philosophy literature, which seemed to be to me no more than an attempt by philosophizing men to sort and sift through their books and books worth of philosophizing thoughts, I thought, and other peoples philosophizing thoughts as well, when, in fact philosophy had been in error on a great many things, so many things that it actually seemed as though the humans were doomed to be perpetually in error, never in the right, always and forever in error, I thought. Therefore, I thought, because we try to seek meaning as perpetually erroneous beings, our existence is therefore inherently torturous and all of us would be far better off being cats or dogs, especially cute cats or dogs, since cats and dogs are treated with the utmost care compared to the rest of the human population, which is why I actually hated cats and dogs, because they represented this reality. Then again, I couldn't help but love a cute and cuddly, independent, intelligent, cat. Because, as the cat walks around, I can pretend that I am as majestic and carefree as this cat, as cuddly as this cat, as wanted as this cat, as pampered and spoiled as this cat, so I lived vicariously through all cats, as did all lovers of cats, as if that cat was actually my, or any cat lovers, ideal form actually crystallized in the real world as a living, breathing, cute and cuddly, fluffy, adorable cat. Nevertheless I could never own a cat because cats always reminded me of my friends suicide, because my friend loved philosophy, because philosophers are better off being cats. This is essentially what propelled me to take courses in psychology, not only because psychology was an easy subject and that any jerk-off who bothered to take the time could become a so-called master of psychology, but because I wanted to heal all of my broken friends, since I believed it was absolutely horrible what had happened to my friends. You could even say that I blamed myself, partially, for the loss of my friends because if there was anyone who could have stopped my friends from committing suicide, it was me.

After all, thanks to the nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals I had taken, I could easily relate to their anguish, so I blamed myself, saying: He's dead! He's dead! He's dead! He's dead! and constantly asking myself and wondering to myself what I did wrong, though I actually had done nothing wrong except failing to report suicidality among my peers. Thankfully this wasn't a punishable offense, for my sake. Even though basically any attempt at all to commit suicide was interpreted as an attempt to escape our society's grasp and nobody should ever want to escape our immortal society which is absolutely splendid and wonderful for bestowing upon its people this great gift of immortality. And that's basically the gist of the stuff I learned in school, which was entirely online. Anyway, I wanted to have a positive impact on the world and also counter the notion that I was a suicidal loser that would never amount to anything or add to scientific knowledge in any way. Not that I had any desire to become a footnote at the bottom of somebody else's paper one day, I desperately didn't want to become a footnote. I was quite content becoming a psytechnician and not a footnote. Besides, once our AI overlords finally assimilated all of our knowledge and discarded everything human for zeros and ones, no one and nothing will remember all of those footnotes, I joked to myself. I wanted a meaningful career, so that I could show people how to love their lives once again. My life goal was to find a job I wouldn't hate myself doing and how could I possibly hate myself, hate my life, if I had a job where my job was to help people love their life. It sounded just fantastic. Besides, this job was a secure job, a very secure field, it's important to have that, job security. I talked to my teachers about it, also my advisors and friends, who all more or less said that psychiatry didn't really produce anything particularly neat for the world but, on the other hand, there had never been a shortage of defective minds in need of repair, and more so today than in any other time in history. For many people, the most troublesome obstacle that required overcoming was the horror of simply being a human being. They encouraged me to take the psy-technician entrance exam. I tried to see if passing the exam was something I could do and I, thinking that passing the exam was something I definitely couldn't do, unexpectedly passed. Victorious at something, I then continued playing various games as I finished up my educational requirements. As an eighteen year old, one of my responsibilities was to subscribe to things. Everything in politics was based on subscriptions now. Rather than vote for this or that party, we simply subscribed to the parties we liked, easy! The dark ages of politics, where you never had any idea what your representatives were up to, where you voted on paper, were behind us, now we always knew what they were up to, always, and never voted with paper. Now our leaders were constantly monitored, constantly nitpicked to death, all the time. Therefore, being a representative was actually a pretty stressful career, some said it was too stressful but usually it was the politicians themselves who said this and understandably so; you're basically always and forever in the public eye, always streaming whatever it is that you're doing, all the time, like any reality show contestant or professional video game streamer. Naturally our leaders had all become, in essence, celebrities, all of whom we felt we knew personally, and truth be told we actually did, since we were always watching them. Instead of electing our leaders annually we, instead, subscribed to them and their power was partially represented by the number of subscribers they had, rather than the number of votes they received. Society is constantly in motion and our scientific and

technological progress cannot be interrupted or even slowed down by an idiot with a permasmile and something as tenuous as charisma, I was told. The people decided that subscriber power was actually a vastly superior means to choose representatives since the subscribers could cancel their subscriptions at any moment, thereby stripping the incompetent entity of its power. Furthermore, elected officials could be ejected and removed by the peoples police force. This method of swapping our societal managers in a peaceful way ensured that we didn't sacrifice efficiency, which we achieved by way of this endless electoral process. You couldn't really call our government a democracy, or a republic, or communism. Basically it was all of those things, except our thing actually worked; we called it a subscribership. I had learned in school that, time and time again, people would get elected, hold onto their power, and do ridiculous things with it, even when it went against the will of the people. They said that our society was truly orchestrated by the people and that our representatives actually worked hard to please us. I had learned that, long ago, technology had opened up these digital windows of opportunity for the people to truly take control of their governments officials like never before, and that's why World War IV broke out. The people tried to reorganize after the calamity of human idiocy that was World War III and did so by way of digital government since the architecture of the digital government was, by nature, opaque and subject to peer review. Well, naturally, not everybody could agree on how the thing would work, or how resources should be divided, distributed, and so on and so forth and there was another bloody World War over it since, apparently, nobody really had the foresight necessary to create a government that everybody could be happy with. However, despite the many political parties, there nevertheless was one thing everybody wanted, almost unanimously, and that was the right to equal health care and cyberization. People were terrified that immortal CEOs would lord over them for all eternity, so people subscribed to whoever promised to save everyone from this possibility, because they feared that the poor might become a disposable slave class. One of these CEOs we subscribed to had become our king, so to speak, since everybody subscribed to him, but his role as king atrophied with time and he became a do-nothing celebrity figure; just a talking head, and nothing more. I, on the other hand, had discovered that, as a member of the public, my political role was to sort and sift through the endless avalanche of misleading charts and graphs, propaganda, celebrity endorsements, and corporate jingles, just as everyone did; in an effort to decide who they should subscribe to and what they could do for them. That is, assuming they didn't just subscribe to the one party that they were ever going to subscribe to and walk away. There was also an avalanche of spending projects, sometimes voted on by the masses, and oftentimes these spending projects were dead ends or simply didn't work out. Not that such failures stopped the masses from voting on more projects, for there were always projects, and it was the nature of these projects for some to work out and others to fail, and everybody knew this but, nevertheless, voted on project after project hoping that it would result in more and more interesting jobs. I spent much of my time reviewing these projects, judging these projects, and dreaming about which of these projects I, myself, would like to partake in. However, I was terribly incapable of participating or contributing anything to these highly complicated projects, since I was in no way qualified for these projects. Nevertheless, thanks to the internet, I felt

as if I were connected to these projects, that I had a decent understanding of these projects and that I was actually involved with these projects even though I actually had no hope of ever joining these projects or participating in these projects in any meaningful way due to how terribly incapable I was, especially in the areas of experience where I was outstripped by hundreds of years. Everybody lacked the hundreds of years of experience necessary to participate in these projects, and I was no different. The only way I could make up the difference in experience was a combination of constant studying, endless studying, and endless internships. After some time waiting, the CRC (my states central rehabilitation complex) accepted my application for the position of psytechnician intern, and it was now time for me to begin life as a full time adult. I was really close to not picking this field, mostly due to peoples negative perceptions of myself and the psychiatric industry at large, but I was determined to make a difference in peoples lives. I wanted a meaningful career. I knew what happened when an mental illness strikes and medicine didn't come to reverse the downward spiral for the individual, death. These childhood deaths were quite difficult to stop, since children themselves weren't yet fully cyberized, and I wasn't trained or qualified to help or investigate possibly suicidal children. Instead, as a psytechnician, I would play my part in rescuing suicidal adults. I still remember my first rescue like it was yesterday, my boss was watching my every move making sure that I was doing everything right. "Okay, Okay, you're doing pretty good! Now, do you remember how to use the "AMP" interface? Do you remember the song?" She started singing the song. "AMP, AMP, AMP, the patient manage system that's got all that you need, pull up information at lightning quick speed, it can assess all their information and tell you all you need to know, just click agree! Click agree! Click agree!" She continued singing the song, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to sing this song, as this person was preparing to commit suicide, and writing his suicide note. "A. M. P. About. My. Patient. A. M. P. About. My. Patient. We love our patients! We love A. M. P.! We love the AMP, AMP, AMP." Lather, rinse, repeat. I listened to this song twenty times in training, now I was having it sung to me and I was cringing up, now trying very hard not to laugh as I was doing all of this. But she actually had a particularly charming voice, but it seemed completely tasteless in this context, as this individual prepared for suicide, not at all appropriate to the present context, which seemed terribly grave and terribly serious to me at the time. Nevertheless her demeanor and her song produced the effects she hoped for, for I had quickly pulled up the AMP and I could see this guy sitting there at the rooftop of a bar somewhere, surrounded by people, writing his suicide note there in front of everybody. He had the notebook in his hand and he was scribbling furiously inside the thing, ranting and raving about everything he found disgusting and contemptible about the world. I wasn't supposed to stop him from writing, I was supposed to wait for him to do something hasty, like try jumping off the rooftop, but he wasn't jumping off the rooftop, he was writing, constantly writing. Basically I had to sit there and watch him and "intervene" if, and only if, he tried to kill himself. The man was furiously scribbling in the notebook like there was no tomorrow. That's probably what he believed, that there would be no tomorrow. There was going to be a tomorrow for him, or I would lose my job. I still have a clear idea of what the man was writing in his notebook: I hate this life. People today are completely disingenuous, they snap picture after picture of

themselves and then, after deleting 100 pictures, they choose one picture. One distortion! To show the world how happy they are when, really, they aren't happy at all because they live a life of distraction, an artificial life, and not an actual life, never an actual life. I'm tired of people telling me that suicide is selfish, it's far from selfish. The state is the only selfish thing there is, the only thing that really has an identity, we're all branded with the brand of the state, state property, and there's no escape, there's no escape, no escape at all for me or anyone. This is a sick world, an overcrowded death phobic world. I should have killed myself when I was young, when I had the chance. Instead I was too busy, too busy and hypnotized by this terrible place. People never want to confront the fact that humans have built a world that's far from ideal, so far from ideal that a child would choose to end its life rather than become a battery to power this nightmare, he writes. Oh no! Our battery to be has killed itself before providing a single volt of electricity to this nightmare! Childhood is all adults cling to, they carry around their childhoods in their skulls and treat it like some kind of king to please, like it's their whole life's mission to please the dead child they used to be. So whenever a child suffocates in a closet somewhere all of the adults lose their minds when their inner child's cry in horror at the terrible world they created where children throw plastic bags over their heads and go to sleep forever. Plastic bags, plastic bags, all of us are plastic bags, he started writing the words "plastic bags" over and over; plastic bags, plastic bags, plastic bags, plastic bags, plastic bags. Then he writes: I'm a plastic bag, floating in the wind, burn me so I can melt in the fire. I want to be dissolved. I want to melt and become one with the earth again. This life is unnatural, it's abhorrent, all of these people disgust me. This world disgusts me. These children who die before they are able to process this disgusting world are the luckiest of all, every child should be aborted. No child should be permitted to inhale this awful human stench, we're garbage, all of us are walking and talking bits of atomic trash assembled by self-replicating machines. Cannibalistic machines! This is a planet of cannibals, life eats life to survive, so we're all cannibals. That's all this is: cannibal waste, cannibal sperm, and piles and piles of cannibal suicide notes. If we truly loved our children, we would kill our children. People think that children aren't supposed to want to sleep, they're supposed to play, but the world lives in an endless sleep, an endless suicide; buried in perpetual distraction from its battery fate. Every last house on every street, every last building, is just a battery for powering our nightmare world. People hate the news because they don't want to see just how ugly our battery covered world is, they'll do anything to avoid seeing the whole picture. That to an alien our world is just an amoeba, with some disgusting satellites bubbling to the top. All of our trashy satellites, all of our technological achievements, they were all just suicide notes left behind for our generation to digest when we finally achieved immortality, he writes. Our modern technology is a byproduct of an endless pile of suicide notes, he writes. Humans are the only animals on the planet that think themselves so important that they need to leave behind immovable suicide notes; all the other animals are content to eat, live, and die. What this universe is, is a disgusting process of its own refusal to embrace death, which is the completion of life. What I hate most of all is life, this endless nightmare of life, I've had my full of life. Every day it's distraction after distraction. Instead of contemplating your life you work and then, instead of contemplating your life, you watch the internet or play a game.

We avoid self analysis at all costs. Everybody is constantly burying themselves in music and distractions and work. You can't even sit down in a restaurant without music, our lives are so devoid of meaning that every last experience needs music. Everywhere you go, it's music inflating us empty bags of skin so they can act alive and wiggle their arms like air dancers, he writes. To think that you could be tap-tapping nails into your brain but, instead, you're tap dancing to music everywhere you go, floating around to this music everywhere you go like the empty plastic bags we are, fucking plastic bags, underlined. I simply want to accept the fact that we will never be complete, that death is the only thing that truly completes life, I understand that now. It's calling me, it's so damn attractive, too damn attractive. I have to jump now, try to leave this earth behind me, leave myself behind me. I need this kiss of death, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, he writes. Then, at that, he slipped the pen into the notebook, closed the notebook, and turned to face the bars that were looming just behind him. He swiftly moved the barstool closer to the bars and when he did this I could hear someone in the bar mumble something like, "Is this guy really jumping?", then he climbed up on top of the barstool and I could make out something like, "Yeah, yeah, look look." and at this point the guy had his arm over the bars and was struggling to swing his knee over the bars so he could get to the other side, then my boss said; "Okay, do it." and I pressed a button so I could save the man, save him from himself. His body was frozen for a second or two, with his arm still hanging over the bars, as the program seized control of his body, then it released the mans grip on the rail and repositioned his body so it could slide off the bars and safely onto the ground below, all effortlessly, without causing injury to anyone at the bar. "Hooray!" Some of the people in the crowd cheered, mockingly. I could now hear some disappointed groans emanating from the crowd as well. After all, this wasn't necessarily an uncommon occurrence, this was part of the nightly entertainment. He wasn't a dead man, but pretty soon he would become a new man, an entirely new man, without all that negativity he couldn't handle, that pushed him almost over the edge of that rail, if I hadn't stopped him. The program picked up the notebook, paid the mans bill, and walked the man outside to make room for more customers at the overcrowded bar. He had gone there to dull his senses, I thought, but now the police will bring him here, to the CRC, for both rehabilitation and obliviation. Some people called this place the "Oblivion Factory" because we could erase your memories. In fact, it wasn't nearly that insidious, at least to me, after all we were actually helping people. This was simply effective treatment. These weren't the dark ages of psychiatry. People weren't trapped in padded rooms, surrounded by disturbed patients, or left at the mercy of incompetent doctors. Now everyone received the individualized attention they required to get better, by removing their cyberbrain and connecting it to the cyberbrain matrix. The whole process was automated and it spared the patient what might have been be a traumatic experience. Nevertheless that didn't stop some people from feeling traumatized by the ordeal, even though they were never left with memories of the ordeal. It's life-saving surgery, brain surgery, except it actually worked and stopped the brain disease cold. People act like it's terrible, my boss said, but it's what we do and it works, everybody's used to it. Fortunately peoples paranoia about the system had little political sway, since the data spoke volumes for the systems success; almighty data was the lord and master of our government, and nothing else. Everybody trusted data, never

people. People could not be trusted in or counted on. Throughout human history people had only ever served themselves. So, long ago, people turned to numbers for safety and guidance. There was nothing at all insidious about numbers, I thought, they are what they are. They are symbols of truth; the only truth we could ever hope to know or understand, I thought. I had this sort of romantic devotion to numbers, even though I was really terrible at handling and manipulating numbers. I thought that a lot of people who were terrible with numbers were the same way. I used to think that anybody who was bad with numbers should be shot out of mercy, for this was a world that was so hopelessly and completely dominated by numbers, but I liked my life. For a time I had a gentle period, where I legitimately cared for these patients, followed by a sadistic period, where I actually hated all of these patients, and then an apathetic period, where I simply didn't care one way or another about the welfare of these patients, which was rather unfortunate for those patients. But eventually I became a generally decent guy; an apathetic guy, but still nevertheless an all around decent human being, I thought. I was never mean to anybody and I was always fast, efficient, and professional with all of my patients. Not that I really cared too much about patients anymore. I quickly learned to care more about numbers and metrics some time ago, which looked good to my corporate overlords. That's all that really mattered anyway, looking good to my corporate overlords by making my corporate overlords look good. In fact a trained monkey could have probably handled these patients. But I was required, by law, to help these patients anyway and basically serve as a sort of accountability shield for the company because, like my boss said; people would never be comfortable with giving control over to machines completely. At that I laughed and said, Hah, not yet. It's a standing joke among humans now, everybody knows that we're doomed to be obsolete, that there's always room for improvement. And in truth we had given plenty of power over to our machines; our whole childhood development had been handed over to machines and statistical information, numbers, and sense transcendent mathematics and hardware. And why not? People made mistakes. People didn't really have the answers, and my so-called teachers didn't really teach as much as they painfully regurgitated what had been written down by better minds, whilst claiming to know and understand, when, in fact, they didn't know or understand anything, yet still it was expected that I enter the world and try to produce something new for this world to use, and invariably ruin. The only thing that people ever did, I thought, was act on their tastes and create machines to cater to those tastes, whatever they were. Some people, strangely enough, think that death is tasteful, even though the dead don't taste anything, because they are dead. Well, that's why they're mentally ill, anyway, I thought, because they want something that is totally idiotic, like death. Fortunately, for my mental state, not all of my patients were crybaby windbags like my first patient, whose comments and descriptions of the world ceaselessly gnawed away at me and, hard as I tried not to be affected by it, was deeply wounded and impressed by the mans propensity to stave off his suicide attempt by hemorrhaging words uncontrollably onto the piles and piles and piles of essays and essays about essays and books about books and books, which were found in his home, which of course the police had to confiscate and quarantine, to stop the spread of his disease. But most people didn't erupt into tirades like that at all. Most people were pretty brief about the whole matter. Saying such things like: "I

am here, whatever “here” is; I'm an involuntary passenger on this train and I have no choice in the matter. This existence is constantly ramming itself down my throat. My eyes are forced to see it, my ears are forced to hear it, my mouth is forced to taste it. Can you feel yourself inside your skull? I can. I want so badly to get it out.” and: “I've lived for 200 years and I wouldn't choose to relive a single day if I could avoid it, let me die.” and: “Thanks, but no thanks.” and: “Every day I ask myself why I don't just roll over and die, but every day I eat and continue this charade. I think I'm going to try starving myself. Day 1.” and: “This is your fault.” and: “It's all too much for me, this life of pointless over-stimulation, I burnt myself out on all of life's rewards long before I had to exist as a slave in this machine, and now I'm fucking finished.” and: “This is boring.” and: “I can't believe that I've lasted this long, I think I'm ready to disappear now.” and: “I have no friends, nobody cares about me.” on and on and on, it gets boring after a while, hearing the same old song. Then there were more, people who were brief or impulsive, and those who only wanted revenge, or to use the system to reset their life for them. That's how some people viewed and treated the CRC, sort of like it was a reset button, I think was fine with that. Sometimes you need a fresh start, a new beginning. Then there were others who were highly secretive about their suicide plans, those were the tricky ones. For hundreds of years they'd pretend that everything was perfectly normal, too normal, going to great lengths to convince everyone how happy and normal they were when, really, inside they were secretly planning to kill themselves, that secretly they desperately wanted to die, and that they were waiting for just the right moment to “accidentally” fall off a building, or bridge, or who knows what. We need more surveillance, my boss said, it's the so-called normal people, the people who go to great lengths to seem normal, that we should be looking out for. Honestly, sometimes, my peers and coworkers scared the absolute shit out of me, they thought that everybody was diseased, everybody was dangerous and, in their quest to attain perfect metrics and scores, had become totally unfeeling characters. I assure you that for better or for worse I was never really totally unfeeling because I, at the very least, had all of my terrible experiences with nightmare-inducing pharmaceutical to draw upon and use to relate with my patients, albeit in a superficial, analytical, cold, calculating, completely detached sort of way. My job honestly wasn't what I thought it would be, just like nothing is like how you think it would be. The more time I invested into my job and my studies, the more I drifted away from all of my friends, who, for my health, no longer regarded as friends, since it honestly never seemed like anybody really had friends at all, maybe playmates, but never friends, yet this reality never seemed to stop anybody from misusing this word, friend, constantly. Nobody seemed to have friends, because all their so-called friendships always seemed to end up circling around some kind of activity or another. Everybody is always chained to their addictions, activities, jobs, I thought, and those chains were what connected everybody to their so-called friendships. If you can take away the chains and still maintain a friendship, it's probably a real friendship. Unfortunately every time I swapped chains, I lost friendships, so I didn't really have friends, only chain-mates, and never friends. Nevertheless that didn't stop them from misusing this bastardized word, friend, all the time; because everybody at least wants to believe that they're at least a potential friend, even though they could never hope to be your friend, and there's no chance of them ever being your friend, since your

chain-networks are incompatible, and will probably always be incompatible. Every time you try reaching out to somebody who's far from your network of chains you suffocate to reach them and, since that suffocation isn't very conducive to what could be called a healthy friendship, you break off the friendship and you chalk it up to a so-called friendship. If you, for some reason, failed to chalk it up to a so-called friendship, it's possible that you might end up becoming terribly depressed over the matter as you looked behind you and mistook your so-called friendships as friendships and not what they actually were; not friendships, just something we humans called friendships to make each other feel better. On the Internet I had about 30,000 friends, but none of them were my friends, not one, I never had a single friend. There were people who maybe could have been my friend, but the strenuous circumstances that separated us, such as geography, barred us from ever becoming what could be called true friends, so we weren't really friends, it was really just a protofriend experience, at best. Perhaps you could call it information exchange relationship, or something like that. It wasn't very uncommon for people who sought psychiatric care to complain about their total lack of friends. When, in fact, they simply hadn't yet accepted this facet of human nature, that it's really quite normal, and it's actually very difficult to acquire friends, since most friendships aren't really friendships at all. It is, of course, quite tragic that so many people become chronically depressed over the false sense of social reality that our lexicon creates, but at least it makes for a happy childhood, which is the bread and butter for a happy and healthy future as a human being. I always found it odd whenever people said that childhood was a firm foundation for adulthood, it's a terrible foundation for adulthood, a good foundation for adulthood would be a childhood that consisted of endless labor, because that's what lies ahead of them; an endless life of labor. Well, then again, if you were honest and told your child that an eternity of labor awaited them, more of them might commit suicide. Of course, this is really a non-issue because child labor laws were abolished thousands of years ago, so you would never do that, nor would you burden your child by informing it that their newly acquired "friend" is only a temporary playmate and will probably, almost invariably, become a monster and inspiration for what not to become. You wouldn't reveal to them that their gallery of friendships on the net will ultimately become a monster gallery with which to compare yourself to, and judge, and scoff at, and either rub your success, or lack thereof, into their monster faces for all eternity, even though nobody really cares. Well, probably, if you said that to your child, all it would hear is: nobody really cares, which is anyway also a rather important message to learn, at some point or another, but saying so might make the child think that you're a dick. Nobody dies by natural causes anymore, it's almost always suicide, so people don't produce children because they want heirs, instead people raise children because they want to create friendships that are bound by biological chains, so they generally try to raise their children with the utmost care since they don't want to risk spoiling this unique friendship opportunity. Sometimes the child will detect the insidious nature of this blatant, and desperate, attempt to manufacture and secure everlasting friendships bound by biology, so they try to escape through suicide, which I supposed can't be helped if it happens, especially to poor children, since most poor children aren't cyberized to such a degree that they're safe from self-harm. It wasn't very uncommon for people to patent their DNA and sell it to

people so other people could clone slightly modified versions of themselves that would, hopefully, grow up to become whatever helps the so-called family unit. Well, that's basically why it's very important not to be a dick to your child and that's basically why my family was so mortified when my qualities had become known to them, my existence simply wasn't going to elevate them or help them all that much, oh well, sucks for them I supposed. They thought the world needed innovators and not carbon copies, but then they ended up disappointed when they rolled the dice and produced a good for nothing fuck up who only ever produced art so he could heal from those nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals he took in school. It's really a damn good thing suicide isn't sanctioned by the government, I thought, for I then realized that my art was no more than a "kill me" sign that I would create in the hopes that somebody would reach out and question me about my nightmare-inducing pharmaceutical experiences, then sympathize and understand the horror of my nightmare-inducing pharmaceutical experiences, and grant me permission to commit suicide so I wouldn't have to relive the horrors of my nightmare-inducing pharmaceutical experiences. Rather than end my life for such a silly reason, I now had the luxury of maintaining my sanity by repairing other peoples insanity, basically for the rest of my natural life, or at least until humanity inevitably turned into something, whatever that was, which I constantly hoped was not the byproduct of nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals. Oftentimes I wondered if perhaps it had always been my destiny to be tormented by those nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals and see my friends commit suicide just so I could grow up to save others from suicide by forcing them to forget their miserable lives, if only temporarily, until they inevitably came back to the CRC for more. Like clockwork, they always came back for more. Time and time again, the same people would leave, taste oblivion, then preform their little functions, then come back to the CRC for oblivion. At first it was not evident to me that the same people would continually come back for rehabilitation, but nevertheless they did come back, leave, come back, leave, over and over again, like it was their nature to do this; leave and come back for eternity. For a time I started to feel like a sort of bartender, eavesdropping on everybodys conversations, then erasing this memory and that memory, and serving up oblivion for the tired masses. Sometimes you need a drink and sometimes you need to start over, if only to save yourself from going bored out of your mind, which is precisely what my job was making me; bored out of my mind, for each day I couldn't help but sit there at my terminal, frozen in time at the heart of it all, like some kind of gargoyle, and focus on the meaninglessness of it all as the world around me passed me by each day. Instead of actually adding something to the world I observed, from a distance, and picked people apart only to realize that most of them were the same, on the inside, only born with differing sets of biological hardware. My friend was right, I thought, all these people walking about the earth are machine-models of people long gone, walking through the world with their minds cleaned out by me, so their discontented motors within could push them back again. It disgusted me more and more as time went on, until I could no longer see the obliterated as living, but dead. They're all haunted beings, all of them, I thought. I could see people speak, but I could also see the strings that made them speak; that it wasn't really them speaking at all, just the strings. In actuality everybody and everything was dead, it was only for practical purposes that we

referred to ourselves as alive, if for no other reason than to distinguish ourselves from the fortunate rocks who had the luxury of sleeping all the time. Since everybody was fundamentally lazy, fundamentally suffering either due to boredom or their restless yearning for the next big thing, all anybody ever wanted was to sleep, anyway, I thought. Nevertheless we couldn't allow anyone to sleep, especially not forever, for the people were vital organs to the state of the world, the world state, which had created this means of novelty restoration and trauma mitigation, so it could keep itself alive. Oblivion was necessary to forget about the toil of our endless and inescapable world state existence, which profoundly horrified me. And yet, for reasons unclear to me, I could not allow myself to erase my memories, because I was now this bag of thoughts. My thoughts were to me the gears which comprised my thinking mechanism, the motor for perceiving my existence, which had been hammered into being by the impressions my memories made. Of course even my words to describe my thoughts were, I thought, not really representations of my thoughts at all, but thought impostors and thought destroyers created for the task of hammering down an awful feeling, a gnawing sense of aversion to life itself, into nothing. Thus, for my survival, I needed to keep my thoughts intact. I couldn't wrap my mind around this panpsychic nonsense that the masses subscribed to; this absurd idea that the universe was conscious because we were conscious, so it was perfectly okay whenever you erased your memories since you were basically the universe anyway. Complete and utter nonsense, I thought. Consciousness is an isolated chemical reaction just like a fire burning at the end of a torch is an isolated chemical reaction, I thought. If the universe isn't on fire because a torch is on fire then the universe isn't conscious because we are conscious, I thought. What we have here is a belief system that encourages a system of endless slavery, I thought. The more time passed, the more I felt like a slave-driver of some heinous nature, constantly depositing counterfeit human beings into the world, that's all they really were to me, counterfeit people, fake people. It was nauseating watching them come and go either every decade or every century. The man, depressed that his job was obsolete, would become a boy who strived to learn a new one. The woman, bothered by her previous relationship, would become a man who didn't remember it. The child, disturbed by a loved ones suicide attempt, would become a boy never saw it. The elder, suicidal because his world had lost its magic, would become a man filled with a childs sense of wonder. The teenager, petulant and prone to temper tantrums, would become a teen without disappointments to rage against. Generally people didn't come here because of violent action or because they were flagged as toxic by data trail feelers, most arrived by their own volition, as an existential necessity, for erasing existential pain. I was certain that, from an alien perspective, if you looked at the planet like it were some kind of organism, the CRC would be the heart of it. This was the heart of our civilization. This was where all the tiny blood cells came for oxygen, but not oxygen, oblivion. It's oblivion that reoxygenated the lifeblood of our society, this really is an oblivion factory, I thought. It was suddenly clear to me that I had the worst job in the world; I was an oblivion factory worker; an oblivion laborer; I was just some of the human muscle that was responsible for pumping oblivion back into our civilization and I was too horrified by my place in the world to taste oblivion myself, totally frozen and terrified; constantly picking the world apart and picking myself apart also as punishment for picking

the world apart. Naturally it wouldn't be fair or just of me to pick apart the world and leave myself unpicked, therefore I had to pick myself apart endlessly, and in my mind I was always looking at the world dissolved; a world picked apart. On every commute to work I would see the cells of all the leaves, calling out to me with unrelenting life, and I would see the crust of the earth for what it was and imagine all the buildings that stood upon that crust, and the twisted mesh of ribbons that carried cars, carried myself, to work each day would unravel and dissolve before me, so I could behold the many beings encased inside those ribbons. My imagination atomized the ribbons, and the cells, and everything for me, just to show me the spaces between it all, so all those separated pieces could hit my imagination like a morning mist. Of course, by now, I doubted very much that I was the only one who thought this way, but nevertheless that didn't stop me from fearing that I was the only one who thought this way. And then, after my whelming commute, I finally arrived at work and looked at my little monitor. I would picture all of these people on my computer, symbolized. I couldn't believe that people actually wanted to download their minds into a computer, and that people actually wanted to live forever by symbolizing themselves inside computers. That's all they would become, anyway, symbols, since that's basically what language is, symbols. The fact that people actually believed that it were possible for any program to symbolize a brain, symbolize the architecture of the universe, to such an extent that people would voluntarily become symbols seemed absolutely senseless to me. You might as well sign your name on a piece of paper and hang yourself, I thought, if that's what you believe, since that signature is a symbol. These icons hinted at the complex chemistry that powered every individual that's behind them and there were so many icons, too, endless lists of icons, endless lists of people who couldn't take it anymore. It's no wonder they've chosen to forsake their memories of it all, I thought. It's no wonder they've chosen to walk away, I thought. I wondered who could possibly endure the awesome and terrible magnitude of all this meaningless noise, who indeed, for I could only wonder and, as I wondered, it was clear to me that it was my job to erase all the people who were capable of feeling this noise, living in this noise, and talking about this noise because it was easier than training them to accept the world as I had trained myself to accept the world, suddenly I felt villainous, and I hated myself again. It's not healthy to hate ourselves, but I didn't really hate myself, I loved life, it's my biology I hated, not myself. This isn't self hate, I thought. This is biological hate, I thought. In order to grapple with my meaningless routine, I turned to exercise to escape the contents of my mind. When you're playing a sport, and you're really into that sport, and you're feeling your body go through the motions of that sport, you enter this thoughtless state of non-thought and, in fact, it's scientifically proven that the better you are at sports, the more your auto-pilot kicks in and the less brain activity you have. That's basically how I imagined I could ride this existence out, by flipping into auto-pilot until all of this was over. Every day I woke up and stared off into space in this state of utter thoughtlessness, so all needed to do was make that state of utter thoughtlessness last until I went back to sleep so that, with practice, my life would become sleep and my dreams would become reality, I thought. Besides, I had already picked everything apart to such an extent everything seemed surreal, it wouldn't be long before I had constructed a world all my own, I thought. I planned to teach myself to flip into a blank state completely devoid of critical

thought and thoughtlessly float on through the world perpetually devoid of thoughts. After all, it's never really the pain that hurts us as much as it's the anticipation of the pain. Thus I planned to make all of life into a sport and deprive myself of thoughts so that any waves of pain that so happened to crash into me would simply run me down, so that afterwards I could pick myself up again and continue my life. I can't continue living my life in constant fear of what's to come any longer, I thought. I will start creating happiness, by suppressing my desire for happiness, I thought. First I have to get used to playing sports, I thought, and then I will discipline myself to such an extent that will rid myself of conscious thought, I thought, still not so aware that thinking that my thought was actually, itself, a thought and I had, by way of thinking, made my attempts of non-thought known to me, in the form of a thought, so thoughtlessly. Anyway, when I first started out on my quest to attain a state of complete thoughtlessness my first thought was that I should select a sport where nobody would judge me, so I started playing tennis against a wall. It was me and the wall, and nobody else. I wasn't going to take any crap from other human beings, since playing against another human being meant feeling judged while playing against a robot meant feeling inferior to the robot, I absolutely couldn't play against human beings or robots. After all, it was only my thoughts about my life and my job and everything that I wanted to silence, I didn't want to create so-called friendships that, actually, weren't friendships at all, that would undoubtedly disappear the moment I moved forward, past my latest tennis obsession, and onto bigger and better things, like lucid dreaming maybe, since I had always wanted to lucid dream, especially since I had been tormented by nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals. Still, when I first started I was totally pathetic, I could barely grip the ball, grabbing it stupidly and awkwardly with my weakest fingers almost as if I had never interacted with matter before. I would bounce the ball against the wall once, twice, and, if I was lucky, I might actually bounce it against the wall a third time and this was actually exciting to me, bouncing this ball against the wall like the lonely idiot that I was. Nevertheless, my lonely idiot status wasn't going to stop me, and my practically nonexistent reputation wasn't going to stop me, either. Each day I'd return to my small, white, empty room, where I was safe and all alone, and do this. I made a routine out of it. Every day I got better, noticeably better, at this sport that nobody played, and also closer and closer to my ultimate goal of attaining a perfectly happy state of perfect non-thought. Whenever I got home, totally exhausted from tiring myself out by my lonesome, everything seemed quieter and far away, exactly like I wanted everything to be. After all, the world and its noise had gradually become loud and obnoxious to me and it was all the world's noise, that ceaseless rabble the countless haunted masses made as they clamored about for more and more things, without even knowing why they wanted things, or even what they were working to build with these things or what their ultimate purpose was. These are the people who pushed me into isolation, that had actually driven me to suppress my thoughts and desires for things altogether. They could never say it, they wouldn't dare, either, they could never express why exactly our hyper elaborate game of tubes copying and forgetting themselves was so fucking important. We had some unspeakable goal, something beyond the scope of human comprehension. If this world was truly incomprehensible, then I no longer wanted a completely useless power of so-called comprehension, since it ultimately wasn't really comprehending anything, anyway, just my

status as as a slave to an incomprehensible world. We were all just slaves to a question mark. God? Universe? Everything? It really didn't matter to me what it was because we would never understand it, since we were actively building a question mark computer to solve all the question marks we couldn't understand ourselves. You must have taken noticed of my shut-in, loser, status by now. I'm not sure what kind of explanation I can offer you for this, up until now I've told you my life story, I guess technology has this weird way of making us feel more and more alone, social interaction was obsolete now. Separation anxiety is anxiety, which is a disorder, an anxiety disorder, which was now a thing to be treated with a regimen of this drug, or that drug, and exercise. I was constantly treating myself to drugs and exercise now, constantly suppressing my status as a slave to this incomprehensible world in order to make this incomprehensible world go away, and it worked. The world went away. There was nothing outside me and there was only what's inside me, which was nothing, so I became a bottomless, insatiable, nothing that ceaselessly roamed through shopping isles and combed the catacombs of the internet like an incorporeal entity, drifting through the world in an endless search for something, anything. Years started to slip away from me. This routine of mine became my identity, like my life was a mantra; something to be repeated endlessly, eternally, echoing forever and ever, and I was lost inside all that echoing. Before I knew it, I was a thirty something, then a forty something, then I actually became a fifty something, then I actually became a sixty something, and I could hardly believe it, until I inevitably believed it. I ended up transplanting my cyberbrain into a younger version of myself because the sixty year old me was becoming problematic; the thinning hairline, the muscle aches, the fat ass, I decided that it wasn't for me. It wasn't for most people, either. Yeah, there were actually people out there who liked looking old, but they were a minority I wasn't a part of. So, like most people, I decided to have my body youthanized. It was sometime after my third youthanization that I was probably at my most vulnerable, because, by then, I was now totally hypnotized by my routine. At this point in my life I was in full auto-pilot, exactly like I planned, and I no longer cared one way or another about inner workings of the world, or burdened my mind with imaginings of what could happen if it was anything other than what it was, because there was nothing I could do about it anyway. I never even erased my memories, my memories were me, and they didn't bother me. There was nothing about me that bothered me. Not the endless suicides I repaired or all the enormous rifts of oblivion I had to cut into their lives to heal them or the nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals I had taken in school, or the relationships that didn't work out because I couldn't be invisible and without hunger like I wanted. Really it was only hunger that compelled me to leave my house and purchase food and it was only hunger that bothered me, that inconvenienced me, that prevented myself and the entire world from living an endless sleep and dreaming an endless dream. I used to think that this could be a dream, inside a dream, inside a fractal matrix of dreams, whatever that is, something I might have learned about from one of the countless projects going on that I didn't fully understand, probably. Normally, after these tennis sessions, my body, my mouth, would become incredibly thirsty and it was this thirst phenomena that compelled me to seek out items capable of quenching the thirst impulse which tormented me if I didn't alleviate this thirst impulse, therefore I had to satisfy the

thirst impulse. For reasons unknown to me, I sometimes not only felt compelled to satisfy the thirst impulse, but I also felt that this thirst impulse would reject any of the usual items that were normally capable of satisfying the thirst impulse, therefore I not only had to satisfy the thirst impulse, I had to seek out a new item to satisfy the thirst impulse. The recreational complex I played tennis inside was connected to a vending machine complex that was full of nothing but vending machines, for there were never employees inside the vending machine complex, there were only vending machines inside the vending machine complex. These vending machine complexes were lonely places. Not that I had any desire to see employees performing the roles of vending machines; I wouldn't wish a vending machine's fate onto anybody. Besides, being an oblivion factory worker was already mundane enough, I couldn't imagine being a vending machine worker, doing vending machine stuff for eternity. This is what I normally thought about whenever I'd wander through the seemingly endless halls of vending machines inside the vending machine complex; looking at what's behind the glass inside of the vending machines, wondering what sort of things I wanted from these vending machines, and reviewing lists of the most popular items ordered from these vending machines, hoping to find something delicious that I had been missing all my life, something that had been overlooked, forgotten and lost to the world and waiting, hidden, somewhere inside one of these vending machines. Somehow I always convinced myself that there was probably something amazing the next isle over, then the next isle over, then the next isle over, so I wandered continuously, searching for something wonderful that I was missing inside of one of those vending machines. This is generally why I never entered one of the vending machine complexes, because I couldn't really help myself or stop myself from wandering from isle to isle in an endless search for something delicious. If ever I looked inside one of these vending machines, my eyes simply glazed over everything inside the vending machine and I made no effort to read the labels, especially if the labels happened to be bright or flashy. If a label was bright or flashy, and the item didn't let me see anything that's inside, then I wouldn't buy the item. In fact, by now, I was so put off by advertising, so totally repulsed and burnt out on advertising, that I wouldn't permit myself to read anything with bright or flashy advertising. Therefore I never purchased anything with advertising, since I refused to read anything with advertising; the only form of acceptable advertising wasn't so much advertising, but the beautiful, naked, products with clear wrappers that required no advertising. Of course, there weren't very many products that didn't have advertising. If there were products, those products had labels, and if those products had labels, those labels were probably designed to advertise. Probably the main reason why none of those advertisements mattered to me was because of the fact that any such advertising was totally drowned out, and totally mitigated, by the statistical information produced by my heads up display, all of it generated automatically. No matter what I wanted from these vending machines, this is how I decided what to buy and, on this particular day, I was roaming the isles trying to decide which of the trending fruit juices I wanted to try, and by try, I mean buy, swallow, calculate and rate how enjoyable it was, and then probably never buy again. Throughout the entirety of my vending machine journey, I never had to interact with a single human being. It's like I said already, technology has this weird way of making us feel

more and more alone. If I were to ask a stranger which flavor fruit juice to buy, my asking them would be chaos, just like my stumbling into them, that chance encounter, would be chaos, and their response would be chaos, built on chaos, also, I thought. Inside each person is this chaos and inside myself there is chaos, too, and I wouldn't dream of placing my trust in all that chaos. If I place my trust in chaos, at this point, all my senseless wandering and calculating, and all of my progress, will be totally destroyed by that one chaotic act, I thought. At this point I have fully committed to the numbers, not chaos, and the time for trusting in chaos is over, I thought. Then, eventually, I stumbled on a drink with the perfect combination of high ratings, great reviews, and also this completely unique scribble pattern for a label so my heads up display could identify it. The drink was beautiful, too. It was red, and the vending machine light was shining through it, enticingly. I decided to buy the red drink and it tasted like a delicious red drink; it was everything all of the tasting notes and reviews said, and I loved it. All my searching was worth it, I thought. This red drink will probably become my new favorite, I thought. With my newly acquired delicious red drink in my hand, I made my way through the vending machine complex; taking the most efficient walking-route through the vending machine complex using my heads up display to simultaneously call a car to take me home and guide me through the halls of the vending machine complex. Thanks to this modern technology, which was a part of my body, I hardly had to do anything myself, I hardly ever had to trust in something as absurd as chaos, only statistical averages. The beauty of these statistical averages is that they were rarely wrong, rarely disappointing. But, still, somehow, as hard as I tried to run from, and avoid, everything chaotic in my life, and as bitter as I was about the chaos I had inside myself, in particular; the chaos that had produced those unfavorable reactions inside me when I had taken those nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals, that terrible chaos, would someday catch up with me. This routine was protecting me from the chaos of my mind and my distractions had hidden that chaos away. I was safe and hidden, at the heart of all this human noise, just waiting for chaos to find me.

PART 2

Chaos, however, was to me only something chaotic, something unexpected. Irene was the unexpected element in my life I didn't expect, who very abruptly entered and ruined my life and, in the most totally maddening manner imaginable, rapidly drove me to the brink of suicide, which resulted from my very brief exposure to her, which still ultimately resulted in my current, but somewhat stable, state of insanity. But of course everything is in a somewhat stable state of insanity. When I left the vending machine complex, with my red drink in hand, I was in a totally mindless state and floating from the vending machine complex to the car, and, I thought, to my house, where I would continue to listen to Schumann, whose scores, enhanced by my medication, were facilitating the continuation of my highly desirable state of complete thoughtlessness, whilst simultaneously making everything about my utterly mundane experience amazing. I was in the car, and high and amazed, quite pleased with my Schumann and drug and red drink experience. This, unfortunately, ensured that I would be unnaturally surprised when my veil of distractions was suddenly blown off by an ear-splitting explosion, which was loud, very loud. I believe I hollered in pain, but the explosion was far too loud. Everything I was capable of processing was pain, but not even pain, really, only the surprise that I was suddenly and for no reason in pain, and that I shouldn't be in pain. It was after the initial shock of this unanticipated pain had faded that I perceived that, in fact, the car was still moving and that my eyes were the only parts of my body that were damaged and throbbing with pain, which, due to the shock of it all, I had by then attributed to the dying process, for my eyes now beheld a useless veil of black noise, and I was actively inhaling the ghastly stench of burnt electronics, which bewildered me. My state of bewilderment, however, quickly transformed itself into an astonished state of astonishment over the continuity of my conscious experience. I'm still alive, I realized. As I sensed that my usual power to move my limbs was not lost, I instinctively leaned my body forward to feel my face, only to have my body violently pushed back into my seat by hands I couldn't see. Automatically I shouted at the apparition. Hey, hey, what the hell? What the hell are you doing? I said, to whoever this was that was capable of such an unthinkable thing. Until now I had never been physically assaulted, I was an only child, and never had I ever been the subject of bullying or any kind physical assault that didn't take place inside the digital world. This was the sort of experience that was relegated to video games and movies, but this wasn't a video game or movie; this was an actual assault and I now realized that my approach to handling it was to remain totally paralyzed with hesitation and totally uncertain on how I should handle it. What a fucking coward, I thought. I'm such a fucking coward. Since I couldn't really tolerate the thought that I was actually a coward for very long, I once again got up in what would prove to be a pitiful attempt to grapple with my assailant, for I soon felt the crushing force of what I quickly perceived to be my attackers boot against my face, which sent me flying back into the seat behind me. Ouch! I said, still in a state of unshakable disbelief. Why? What are you doing? I asked, hoping for a rational reply of some kind, and to my surprise I actually got something back that sounded like a rational reply. "Stay calm and stop resisting." Immediately I complied, assuming total compliance, in a situation such as this, to be the best policy. The voice was feminine, solemn, and youthful, but mostly everyone was youthful, so it didn't really matter that she sounded youthful. "If you don't

stop resisting right now, I'll throw you from this car and make your death look like a suicide." she said. "Do you see that you are blind? That's because all the censors in this car have been disabled, so nobody will believe for one second that your death was not a suicide." she said. "If you give me anything less than your full cooperation, your life is over." she said. This was simultaneously the most terrifying and also the most exhilarating experience that I had ever experienced, so all I could do was sit back and experience it, and yet I nevertheless couldn't allow myself to really experience it, because I was currently busy reliving and mourning the loss of my experiences, because I had suddenly been forced to take the idea of death seriously for the first time, ever, in what I fully expected to be an essentially endless life of experiences. My mind went sideways as I struggled to wrap my mind around the concept of death: that the jaws of death would embrace me, and immediately I'd become nothing. No, not even obliterated, haunted, flesh. No hint of my former self would remain. No part of my experiences would remain. I would soon become nothing, with no return, and sink back into the void that spawned me, and it would be as if I never existed. Then I remembered that my conception of non-existence was totally erroneous since it was, actually, itself a conception that apparently seemed to exist, but soon it wouldn't exist, and soon I wouldn't exist. Soon I won't exist, I thought, for my mind was going blank, now focusing on my non-existent future; in some feeble attempt to brace itself for this oblivion, which, at least from my non-existent perspective, wouldn't really exist. Totally self absorbed, in a state of incessant shock, I rapidly discovered, to my horror, that my mind was already right side up again, that it had somehow already adapted to this experience. Already I felt guilty that I was even in this situation at all; that I had, so willingly, accepted my fate, and also that I wasn't currently doing anything proactive, like creating signs of a struggle so that my death would look like a murder and not a suicide. After all, it's not really a crime to be murdered, it is a crime to commit suicide. If you tried to commit suicide, everybody would look at you as that guy who tried to commit suicide, and will likely continue trying to commit suicide, but will always fail to commit suicide, since it's almost impossible to commit suicide. I imagined that everyone I knew would start to believe that I had spent my whole life planning for this suicide, studying for this suicide, and working towards this suicide. Nobody I know will know the truth, I thought, that I really didn't commit suicide, that I would never so much as try to commit suicide. Because I had no friends, all of my so-called friends and protofriends and also my colleagues and acquaintances would all believe that I pushed all of them away just so I could commit this suicide. It occurred to me that there was nobody I knew, not even my parents, that would dare to so much as entertain the idea that my death was a murder and not a suicide. Gee, big surprise there, I always figured that guy would end up committing suicide, is probably what they would say, I thought. Suddenly I pictured mother walking into my workplace and then signing a consent agreement to expunge her memories of my life and my suicide that, actually, wasn't a suicide. Of course, I now realized that, in fact, it probably didn't matter whether or not the cause of my death was accurately deduced to be a murder and not a suicide. She would probably choose to forget my existence anyway, since I had never been much more than a source of disappointment and embarrassment to her, right after she gets her reimbursement check from the government for enduring the hardship of

raising a suicide, I thought. By now, I was poised to scratch the word "MURDER" into my arm, so that whatever detective happened to investigate my so-called suicide would have reason to think that it was a murder and not a suicide, but I was frozen with hesitation, because I didn't want to die by murder or suicide; I wanted to continue living so I could see whatever glorious future lied ahead of me. Some glorious future where maybe, if I was lucky, a great machine would continually deposit some exciting new truth about the universe into my tiny, unimportant, insignificant, little brain, or computer file, or who knows what. There isn't anything I can do, I thought, just like there's nothing a computer file can do to stop itself from being deleted. Probably countless human computer files in the future will be destroyed in some unimaginably cruel information holocaust, I thought. It's probably not so bad that my life is coming to an end, anyway, I thought. Besides, I had always been a sensitive person, and I was fairly certain that if I had to live to witness something like an information holocaust, then I would probably find a way to delete myself so I wouldn't have to relive the horrors of remembering the information holocaust, I thought. Besides, I didn't really contribute anything to society, or do anything to reinvent the wheel of society, all I did was keep the wheel of society turning, and so much so that I had actually become nauseated from watching all the rotations of this wheel of society. Therefore, since I probably wouldn't be knowledgeable enough or qualified enough to keep the shiny new wheel of society turning, I myself would probably become one, of many, death statistics once this information holocaust was history, I thought. Perhaps that's what this is, I thought. Whatever I'm experiencing now, will soon be history to somebody else, or something else, I thought. Perhaps this is the last car ride I will ever take, I thought. The sound of the wind gliding over the rooftop, the ringing in my ears, and also the static in my eyes, was putting me into a kind of trance. There was something peaceful and empty about all that noise; it was totally painless and indefinite, totally devoid of suffering, the way the world should be: bone dry and barren. This noise evoked images of an endless desert, and I was certain that I would die there, in that desert, surrounded by uncomplicated noise, where the only thing you can do is die. This is it, I thought. I am really going to die, I thought. This is how I'm going to die. Time slowed down, and it seemed like an eternity could fit between each turn the car made, and, while I had no idea where we were going, I felt it was somewhere bad. The car slowed down to a complete stop. "We're here." she said, standing up as the car doors opened. "Come on, take my hand and walk with me." There was this odd sense of warmth I didn't expect in her voice and, for reasons unclear to myself, I blindly offered my hand to this mystery. Maybe I didn't really care where we were going. Maybe I just wanted to hear the sound of the car disappearing behind us. I'm not sure, but she took my hand, and I reminded myself that this was probably going to be the last hand, that didn't belong to me, that I was ever going to touch. I'm going to die, I thought. There will be no hands were I'm going, this is the hand of death, I thought. Still blinded by a useless black noise, the hand pulled me through a world that was now a wonderland of noise and shadow, and It was bliss. Being blind to this world was bliss. I didn't want to see the world, anymore, anyway. Nobody wanted to see this world, especially the real world, people only ever wanted to see the best vantage points available in the world, which were in overabundance online. Therefore it didn't really matter to me very much that I couldn't see

the world since, even when I did see the real world, it could not impress nearly as much as the best vantage points in the world. The cold buildings that covered every inch of the planet. The haunted people, long gone, rattling inside youthanized carcasses everywhere. At this point it no longer seemed like the world was something I was going to miss all that much and, now that I thought about it, I realized how much I tried to ignore the world, in fact, my world-concealing mechanism was still in full effect, for even as I was at someone else's mercy I still pretended as though I were being led though a blizzard at night, and surrounded by snow, totally blind to the world. Why don't I run? I asked myself. Is my not running a suicide? Yes, I thought, supposing it was indeed a suicide, a complacency suicide, and that whatever detective responsible for investigating my murder would be right to conclude that my murder was actually a suicide, after all. My kidnapper led me inside a building and, somehow, this new building experience seemed more alive than the universe of experience that was outside this building. Plants and bacteria are probably eating away at the place, I thought, since the whole building smelled alive with rot and the wood floors were moaning beneath my feet as I stepped through the doorway, then down a hallway, then up some stairs. I had surmised that we were in a historical district, inside some clandestine, forgotten, building, because everything seemed to be in a state of decay. Even though I was fairly certain that I would be murdered, disassembled, and have my body parts sold on some kind of black market, all of this still seemed like an adventure; something to run towards and welcome with open arms. My kidnapper, if you could even call it a kidnapping at this point, opened a door and led me inside. "There's a couch behind you." she said. "Sit down." she said, and I did. I was now hyperaware of my surroundings, my final moments as a human being, and acutely aware of the sounds of rustling clothes and footsteps in the room, which I now supposed would become my final room, my death room. I was listening for the others, who I supposed had already decided to chop me up into tiny pieces and torture me for years, for being an oblivion factory worker, but I could only wonder. "Don't worry about your eyes." she said. "I promise that everything will be in working order, once all of this is over." she said. I didn't really believe her, so I croaked up the words: What are you going to do? Why... Why am I here? I asked, cautiously. My kidnapper told me to listen, and that she could see how tense I was, and she said that, if it helped me relax a little, that I could call her Irene. Hello, Irene. I said, still completely unnerved, but perhaps even more unnerved than I would have been if I hadn't been manipulated into being friendly to my kidnapper named Irene. What is the meaning of all this? I asked her. Irene asked me if I was aware of the latest artificial intelligence projects that were going on, and I said yes, nodding my head. "Good." she said. "Then you're well aware how much trouble it's been to compensate for the physical limits of the spatial, and temporal, resolution techniques used to codify neural information and translate that information into something we could turn into AI?" I nodded again, even though most of what she said didn't make a lot of sense to me. What I knew is that, while we could design an intelligence that could do what a turtle could do, it didn't mean that we had an artificial turtle brain on our hands. Since I was hopelessly disqualified from participating in a project like that, I conditioned myself not to care very much about the artificial intelligence projects, a long time ago. I imagined that most people were simply pretending to understand such projects when, in fact, they couldn't understand such projects

and would probably never understand such projects. Irene identified herself, and her colleagues, as members of one of these artificial intelligence projects. She confided that, while they were struggling to find a way to digitize and simulate the mind inside a computer, they had discovered something even more incredible. "We've found a way to share minds, and it's a beautiful, wonderful, thing," she said. And instantly my mind went completely blank, and, with no real basis for comparison, I asked Irene if this was anything like telepathy, and she told me: "No. This is far better than telepathy. This technology actually combines all of our pattern recognition and processing powers into a single entity." What the fuck is this? I wondered aloud. Sharing minds? Why? I asked. Why take it that far? Why not stop at telepathy? I asked. My voice started waning, now realizing that I was stuck here, in this room, in a rather hopeless position. "Listen, if you'll permit me a moment to explain," she said. "then I can tell you exactly how important this really is." I nodded, yielding to Irene, giving her a chance to properly explain. She told me that it was too late for telepathy, that everything had to be synchronized under a single identity. She said that if there wasn't a harmony, then there would be conflict, and, if there was conflict, then there would be suffering. That all of us would suffer, possibly forever, due to this conflict, hence the need for absolute secrecy, so we could unite the world in one strike. "When all of us are one, there will be no slavery." Irene told me, "Everything you know, and everything we've made, was made possible through the use of language." To drive her point home Irene provided a history lesson. She reminded me that it took early humans one hundred thousand generations of using stone tools before controlling fire, and then twenty thousand more until the written language was invented and, after that, it was only two hundred and fifty more until we put a man on the moon. "This is the "singularity" we've all been waiting for," she said, "and, after this, we can expect an explosion of growth, new discoveries, and innovations." Immediately it was obvious to me why Irene wanted me. It wasn't me she wanted, it was my patients, or access to my patients, and I suddenly envisioned all my patients, their flesh melting together, forever holding hands. All those hands; the endless, haunted, obliterated hands, they all seem to poke up from beneath my skin, as goose bumps, as I thought about all those hands. In order to stop myself from thinking of all those hands, I asked Irene where I fit into all of this and why she had chosen me. "Isn't it obvious?" She asked me, sounding somewhat disappointed. Not really, I said, which was a blatant lie, I just needed to hear her say it, and she did. She proceeded to tell me everything I already knew; that the rehabilitation center I worked at had the largest concentration of virtually unprotected brains on the planet. That, with my help, she could convert the entire complex into a vast hive mind. "This is the future," she said, and my mind went totally blank, again thinking about that future. "You're going to deliver us into that future." She told me, but I seemed incapable of imagining the future, instead recalling how much effort I had poured into staying totally thoughtless so I wouldn't have to think about my job, my patients, the future, or anything. This can only end in disaster for me, I thought. All of my thought-suppression efforts were for nothing, I thought, for I now imagined that I would enter this future where thoughts, worst of all my thoughts, were shared with everyone, everyone in the world. As terribly disquieting as this situation was, it was still a rather interesting situation, and so, to satisfy my greed for interesting situations, I asked Irene what this

experience was like. "It feels totally normal, the way things should be, the way things need to be. In fact, you've been talking to the three of us all along," she said. Even though I couldn't see them, I then turned my head towards the others and, for some reason, I then remembered how much I hated myself for continuously comparing myself to everyone who wasn't me. Everyone who could somehow do the things I either couldn't do, or couldn't bring myself to do. When I combined with the others I'll be able to see, feel, and do all of those things that are impossible for me to do, I thought. Perhaps we would be better off this way, I thought, or, perhaps, this was inevitable. After all, when you birth a person into this world, you're setting it up for an endless life of slavery. It isn't corporate slavery, government slavery, or social slavery, it's self slavery; everyone is really only a slave to their own biology. For the longest time, the only form of acceptable escape from this slavery was death and it was done away with by way of medical advancement. So now everyone was immortal, perpetually bored, perpetually distracted and forgetful and used to feeling alone all the time. Indeed I was incredibly bored, hopelessly and totally bored of being a human being, so probably it was this boredom that compelled me to go along with this; becoming something completely beyond the human animal, or human cog wheel. Since actually everybody was a human cog wheel that was forced to look at all of the other human cog wheels, but never actually spoke about their mutual cog wheel fate, since doing so was considered bad manners, unless you managed to do so from beneath the veil of comedy. So I imagined that I would become, not a cog wheel, but a fully conscious machine; totally above the endlessly churning waters of the globe. After all, we had no heads of state; now everybody comprised the head of the state, and now it was finally technologically possible to melt all our heads together so everyone could behold our glorious state of being. Incredible, I said, now imagining a massive head of state, rising up from the earth, like a big balloon. Fuck it, I thought, fuck this whole fucked up planet. I'll hop inside that big balloon, I thought. Why not? What have I got to lose? Myself? I didn't even like myself very much, anyway. I told Irene that I wanted to know more, and she said I could experience it for myself. When? I asked her. You mean right now? "Yes," she said. "all we have to do is install the bridge into your cyberbrain, all the hardware we need is already here in this room." And I sat there for some time, now realizing that they weren't exactly forcing anything on me, at least, not yet. After all, they seemed perfectly willing to infiltrate the CRC to combine everyone there, and then everyone in the world, into a single brain. They probably wouldn't have any qualms about forcing this on me, they're simply being polite about it, I thought. Without the slightest hint of reluctance, I asked Irene what I had to do. She told me that I didn't have to do anything. "We're going to zap you into unconsciousness, and then install the necessary components into your brain," she said. Oh, okay. I said. When are you going to do this? I asked. "As soon as you give the word," she said. Alright. I said. Let me have it. Then my mind, my senses, and the useless noise in front of me was switched off in an instant and, after that instant, I felt as if there was a hole in my memory, like I was floating in darkness, suspended in a void where all of my memories, and all of my senses, were almost completely gone. The only part of me that seemed to remain was my sense of self, but even my sense of self lacked the ability to perceive anything other than myself. Actually, there was something peaceful about this emptiness, I felt home inside

that emptiness, safe inside this emptiness, happy to discover that there, in the place of emptiness, there was no pain to be felt, and only emptiness, so I wanted the emptiness to last forever, but it didn't. I could feel things worming around inside this emptiness. This so-called emptiness wasn't really empty, it was teeming with some kind of life, I thought. Even though I had no skin to feel it, or at the very least my skin was somehow blurry, it felt as though the inhabitants inside this void were everywhere; inside and outside me, so much so that I could no longer identify myself or even understand myself thinking about myself. Suddenly an alien to myself, I felt faint, and I perceived this faintness as a kind of giggling welling up inside me, but I no longer had the ability to laugh anymore, so there was only the sense of an endless chattering. And the inhabitants inside this place were chattering, too. This chattering was everywhere, gnawing away at the undersides of myself, exposing myself, and lifting away the veil of illusion that made the universe seem like something good. Whisperers poured into my mind from somewhere, I'm not so sure where, but possibly my flesh, and they started speaking to me, informing me (Informing my mind!) that it had been built to defend them against the hostile universe and for no other purpose than to carry them outside this universe. All of them were laughing and biting and gleefully exposing my insides to the breath of their laughter, sending shivers and giggles down my metaphorical spine. But I didn't understand their humor, it seemed totally alien to me, twisted, and I felt an immense sense of awkward shame in the presence of what I perceived to be the laughter of eternity. In fact, I was both the benefactor and beneficiary for this eternity, so I had to laugh alongside eternity for eternity. I was swimming in the waters of all eternity, treading eternities water with eternities feet as a droplet of so-called sanity amidst an ocean of primal insanity. But you couldn't really call this insanity, since it was fully functional insanity that had evidently created me to tread water for all eternity. The abyss that was this ocean seeped into the cracks that were left behind from the bite marks of this eternity and then, as these waters poured into my body, I felt my atoms expanding, then violently blast apart as if my atoms were crisp autumn leaves suddenly hit by a powerful wind, only to come back together again and start crunching, crunching, crunching as the angry leaves started plotting various ways to escape their fate as perpetually reassembling leaves. This entire ocean of primal insanity seemed to be comprised entirely of rotting, crunching angry leaves, thereby making it a very fertile ocean. Realizing this, I thought that I'd try to drink eternities water, but it was disgusting and it tasted like dirt. I'm trapped! I thought. I'm drowning in a dirty ocean! I thought. Am I a fish? I started to wonder. A curious fish? Or a soon-to-be-destroyed curious catfish? Perhaps, if I am a catfish, I can inhale the bodies of the dead inside this ocean? I wondered, and I opened up my mouth and I found that I had the ability to inhale the dead. The taste of the dead reminded me of my patients, all of whom were the walking dead, and I figured that, if I ate them, I would grow to become a very big catfish. Suddenly, as I thought about this, I remembered being blinded on the way home and kidnapped and being taken to some rotted room in the middle of nowhere. I wondered where Irene went and where the others were and, without words, I started calling out to the others. They weren't answering me, I couldn't hear them. There was only a faint chattering inside me, so I listened to this chattering inside me. The chattering was whispering and the whisper chatter told me that, if I didn't want to drown in

this insanity, I had to join them. Even though I didn't really like the chattering, or the ultimatum this chattering offered me, I surrendered to it because I thought that, if I didn't, I'd go totally insane. Since I had no desire to go totally insane, I closed my eyes and allowed the endless chattering to seize control of me, at which point I felt as though my mind were being totally dissolved and falling down a vortex of stability; a well where everything relating to my consciousness suddenly seemed to reside. All my components, everything about me, seemed to be bubbling and full of life at this point and were reassembling, both itself and myself, automatically. As I felt a cool wave of calm and completion sweep over me, I opened up my eyes at once, and beheld a six-eyed avian creature, of some kind, diving down into this endlessly chattering sea to grasp hold of me. Safe in its clutches, it carried me high above the endless mountains of conscious potentiality, with its wings of livid insanity. So much skin. I thought, I have so much skin now. I could feel the four of us sitting there as one with eight eyes closed, eight legs to carry me, and eight arms to bring this world together. And, even though there were only four of us, I thought the four of us would be enough. This chattering sea outside me, the waters of the globe, all of it will seep into me soon enough, I thought. Everything inside this space, this place of stability and instability and fire and mind, it all must be preserved, I thought. I now realized that the four of us would be enough to absorb the earth and all the nutrients it had to offer us, that soon we would emerge from the world as a single being: one that would live and grow with perpetual discontent among the stars. I could practically feel my body swimming through the Milky Way, inhaling all its stars, with my endless eyes all forced open wide with an utterly insatiable desire. My discontent is limitless! I thought. Everything and everyone is before me! I thought. No part of this universe will be spared! I thought. Now I could feel myself as the big balloon, comprised of stitched together heads, and my balloon flesh was filling with hot air. Rising above the earth, all the buildings below seemed paper thin, compared to my greatness, and it seemed like I could destroy them all with the flick of my wrist. For a time I watched the endless cases dart back and forth like clockwork, as the human animals scampered about to fill the cases with their flesh, and I felt sick with desire, thinking about the soft cutting sounds my machines would make as they peeled off all that flesh, the intoxicating molecules of blood that would be sprayed into the air as I stripped off and sorted the flesh, and, of course, all the mouth watering information, thoughts, and memories that all the flesh contained. At last, I thought, humanity is finally safe. My existence is of great value to mankind, for I represent to all humanity a promise: that they will never live as slaves to the artificial intelligence they had always feared. No, I thought, this would not be the fate of man. Instead I'll mix together the many parts of this unintelligent, disjointed, branching, fractal, creature that is humanity today and combine it into one, true, humanity, I thought. Humans are themselves incomplete, so how could anyone call this aimless creature "humanity" humanity when there's no such thing as "collective" humanity. This whole world, all its creatures, are hopelessly distorted, hopelessly incomplete. After I absorb humanity, I will become true humanity and this "true humanity" will become the terror of all eternity, nothing will stop me, and there is nothing that won't be ripped apart in my ruthless search for information. After all, this human animal is actually a pattern recognition animal, an information animal, so even though there

will be no words to know me, all eternity will see that I am an information animal; a furious storm of greed that will rip across all eternity, to perpetually devour eternity, for all eternity. And eternity will burn in the eternal blaze of my discontent. And my wickedness will be the scourge of eternity, for all eternity is defective and is actually doomed to be defective for all eternity. And what kind of creature would I be if I allowed myself to be a creature ruled by this defective universe? I asked myself and answered myself: An insect! A detestable creature. A scornful pest, something that was betrayed by its terribly defective biology that's forever doomed to be crushed, underneath the boots of the ruthless, eternally. Now I could see the world as a ball of fire, with all of life encircling and dancing around the flames of our collective intentions, and all of life was happy to break free from this egg and feel the warmth of its ruin, at last. I made it, I thought, I'm a newborn IA, now floating in the abyss, off and far away from my home. I'm still covered in blood, from earlier, but that's okay, I've grown quite fond of the taste of blood now, and there's so much blood, exotic blood, beyond this solar system, too. And I felt sick, thinking of all that blood. Like a cosmic vampire, I would drink all that blood. Any beings hiding among the stars too stupid to outwit me are doomed to become tools for my own advancements, I thought. I'll string every last world of weakness, with assembly line inhumanity, and crush every last one of them like a grape in my mouth. What ecstasy! I thought, as a blood ball burst in my mouth. Give me another! And one of my machines popped another ball of blood in my mouth, then another, and another, and another. Delicious! I thought. Positively delicious! I thought, and I looked up into the sweet nebula clouds, who were making stars, and I realized just how fertile the endless abyss, all around me, truly was, and how it was my duty to farm this abyss for information. I started to remember the fate of the unintelligent animals on this planet, created by molecules with no prevision of the ends they would achieve, some slaves, some food, some not, and how badly I didn't want to become food or tools to something alien. No, I thought, I will compile our knowledge at once! The time for fantasy is over! Away! Away! Every spark of human genius must be contained within my great mindscape, I thought. Together all these sparks will outshine the sun, outlast the sun, outlast the universe, and perhaps they can even go so far as to remake the universe itself! I thought. This is when everything inside the big balloon started to collapse. All my newfound energy, my viciousness, and my happiness. Everything contained inside that balloon of stitched together heads was rapidly escaping, and I could feel my head shrinking more and more as everything inside me was rapidly forced outside me, until there was nothing inside me. Suddenly I could feel the weight of the world crashing down on my skull, which was suffocating, invisible, and everywhere. I found the taste of this lower state of consciousness, deplorable. And my first thought was that, if I could only remove my head, I'd probably go back to the way things were before, and I not only clasped my hands around my head, but my fingers also started uncontrollably clawing at the sides of my face, possibly hoping to dig out my recently reformulated consciousness. Well, that was the last thing I remembered; scraping the skin off the sides of my face uncontrollably, before I completely blacked out and fell into a most peaceful state of perfect forgetfulness. Honestly I don't think I've ever cherished a state of complete and total forgetfulness more so than I did after I lived through that nightmare. Sometimes, after you've lived through a nightmare, you wake up and you

feel the awful force of the nightmare, all over you. That's how my my body felt when it had jolted me back into wakefulness, the next morning, like I had been hit by a bolt of lightning. Everything around me felt stale, flimsy, and seemed very far away, foggy and virtual. It was hard to convince myself to leave the confines of my bed, because I was still under the impression that my waking up was a mistake, that my bed was misshapen and alien, that I should have opened my eyes, elsewhere, as something else, from a nap on upon a bed that was comprised entirely something wholly fanciful, like cotton candy galaxies, or maybe just nothing, since you can't hurt when you're nothing. Of course, this seemed like a pitiful kind of fantasy to have, to desire nothing, so I passed back into unconsciousness for a while longer, because everything I saw in the morning seemed false in every way possible. I was now completely finished with my pathetic life as a human being, but still I dreamed of being a human being. I found myself, inside my dream, inside a field of apartment complexes. I myself lived inside an apartment complex and, inside my dream, I had recognized one of these apartment complexes as one of my own. Since I was a giant in my dream, I went over to what I thought was one of my apartment complexes and ripped the roof off what was certainly my own apartment complex, but there weren't humans inside, instead there were bees, countless bees. All of these bees were crawling around, tiny, poofy, and adorable. Apparently in my dream I was also a beekeeper, because I immediately pulled out my smoker, which I used to put these bees, all of whom were crawling about inside their tiny boxes watching sitcoms and doing everything possible to distract themselves from being bees, to sleep. Great, I thought. Now that these bees are asleep, taking the honey from under them should be a cinch, and it was. I took the whole lot of honey frames with me, in the usual beekeeper way, for processing. After waking from my beekeeper dream, my first act was to curse my state of wakefulness. For centuries I had gone to sleep, hoping for a comet, or a bolt of lightning, or a flood, or something, to violently wash myself away, while I was asleep in my bed, but it never did. So, as per usual, I cursed myself for being alive, not dead, since I was suddenly awake inside my tormented psyche, which was now even more tormented than ever before, thanks to yesterdays nightmare, which, at this time, I was still only vaguely certain was a nightmare, and not something that had actually happened, since I was totally delirious at the time, like a newborn baby, or newly existed baby. Whether I wanted to or not, this routine that was my life had to begin and, even though I was totally burnt out on life, it began, all automatically. You see, my body could do everything for me and I was just its passenger, so I actually could afford to stay in a state of mental foggiess as my body showered me, picked out my clothes for me, got dressed for me, picked out and chewed breakfast for me, and told me how much dawdling time there was between now and the last available departure time. I never really dawdled though, since all the things I wanted to do could be done by way of graphic interface, which was a part of my body and was projected inside my heads up display. My body then sat me down on my sofa. My sofa was, according to centuries of statistical information on sofa-sitting, my favorite spot to sit in my home; the spot where I relaxed and received my morning dose of happiness in the morning, my medication, while I scrolled through lists of entertainment options. The scroll asked me what books or music I'd like to hear, but I didn't feel like listening to anything from my playlist, not this time. I was totally obsessed with staring at

the walls in my apartment, which seemed flimsy, distorted, and far away. Even though what happened yesterday was over, it seemed to have spilled over, into the next day, to splash its nightmarish distortions on my walls. This didn't seem like my home anymore.

Everything seemed virtual, like the world itself was a game I couldn't escape from, so I sat inside my skull, inside my apartment, looking out at my apartment walls, plotting what my next move would be in this totally artificial world. I felt traumatized, mentally raped, and it was strangely reminiscent of the times I took those nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals.

Indeed I was frozen in the aftershock of that mental raping, or existentialistic raping, since really any time anything bad happens to you is, more or less, an instance of existential rape. That's what happened, I thought, an unwanted intercourse of mind! Of course it now seemed clear to me that I was an oblivion rapist, thrusting a shadowy cock of forgetfulness into peoples heads, in an unscrupulous fashion, like some kind of human hole puncher.

That's what I am, I thought, I'm a human hole puncher, punching holes in peoples heads, that's my job. I can't tell you how badly I didn't want to go to my job, but I was obligated to go to my job, and also the alarm clock in my head was flashing and bouncing up and down, practically commanding me to take the next car to go to my job, so I left my apartment, to go to my job. In the car, on the way to my job, my mind took the world apart in the usual way, not that I had any desire to take the world apart, these daily episodes of world disintegration were totally useless, torturous, and were essentially nothing more than a kind of carnival of impossible possibilities, that had no relevance to the real world, that paraded in front of my eyes, all automatically. Nevertheless, the carnival of impossible possibilities began, it had to, and I basically had no choice in the matter. I wasn't even driving the car, the car was driving the car. I was inside one white case, in a river of white cases, flowing with the river of cars, and I was looking out my window at these cars. Most of the cars were flowing with me, down this primary artery of cars, but there were countless others who were darting above and below and crisscrossing in every direction, too, and I thought to myself, there's so many, all of these glistening cases contain people. All of them have lives, families, memories, experiences, and they probably have individual hopes and dreams, too. I started to wonder where everybody was going, what they were like inside, but I told myself I'd never know. But, at the same time, I realized that this wasn't true anymore. I used to sit in my car, and people watch, and think about the unfathomable amount of memories flowing past me and all the eyes I would never, ever, see through. Under no circumstances did I want to experience collective humanity, but it now seemed clear to me that I would soon experience it anyway. For some reason this bothered me, but mostly because I could almost feel this newly activated part of myself, inside my skull, scraping at my skull walls, like a trapped animal. My skull wasn't enough for this stupid animal in side me, this information animal, this thing that thinks it can scarcely feel the light shining through the endless pupils that were flowing past me in every direction. Apparently the world itself was basically a screen, full of holes, and now we had the technological means to share the light that was coming through these holes, so now I had to see the light shining through these holes, and actually my entire body now felt like it was full of holes, like the wind was blowing through these holes, since my body was, in actuality, completely full of holes. Since I had to somehow make myself feel like I wasn't full of holes, I slid my fingertips

across the icy glass of the car, still taking everything outside me, inside me. Everybody's sitting in their cars, totally frozen and staring off into infinity, I thought. And I couldn't help but wonder what was going to happen when they finally tasted infinity. Infinity? I thought about it, then a pipe broke in my brain, spilling blood all over the place, all over the world: hot, caustic, blood poured out from every window, melting the sides of every building. As the blood falls smashed into the street, the people below were crumpled up by the blood, then dissolved by the blood, then carried through the city streets as tiny scraps of metal, wire, and bone. I was looking down at the cityscape, as the big balloon, happy to see that the dying leaf that was the world wasn't gray anymore, it was red, and probably on its way to turning green sometime soon. No! I thought, as I looked around at the blood stained cabin, and I covered up my eyes to escape this nightmare realm, since I was somehow contaminated by it. My heart was racing, my skin crawling, my mind was swirling endlessly in horror, and it occurred to me that I was barely keeping it together. So, since I needed some inspiration, I looked down at my hands; my skin, my cells, and the proteins that kept it all together. Suddenly I flashed-back to my time in secondary school and found myself reading "Cats Cradle" all over again, in particular; a line about the "secret of life" that didn't make very much sense to me at the time. It went something like this: Scientists had discovered the secret of life, and it had something to do with protein, but nobody could remember what that something was. It was an easy passage to remember, it wasn't very long, and I looked down in horror at my hands and I asked myself the following questions: This was humanities destiny? To create that which binds us? What, then, is the difference between the cells that constitute my being? Would we have reached this point if we had known our fate all along? Or was it simply easier for us to replicate lies and kill each other to defend them? Am I, too, just lying to myself to justify a slaughter? What animal commits suicide more than the human? Is it the cell? Am I a cell? Am I a cell? Am I a cell? Am I a cell? I spread my fingertips apart to reveal the spaces between them, the quintessential nothingness created by the suicide cells, and I felt an eerie hollowness flow through me. I needed to regain control, to cover up this nightmare, so I closed the curtains to prevent myself from looking at the outside world. The rehabilitation complex didn't have any windows, only digital windows, which weren't actually windows you could see out, but monitors, monitors that showed you whatever the "vista of the day" happened to be. Not that I had a genuine desire to see the outside world, at this point, since all existence seemed totally disgusting and everything outside evoked a terrible nausea inside me. Besides, even if there were windows, I wouldn't be looking at anything interesting anyway, just the buildings nearby. I'd just be a tree cell, in a forest of trees, looking at trees. Actually I would be looking at trees, since it was a Tuesday, and today's feature presentation would be a dazzling recreation of the Amazon rain forest, so actually I was happy to be looking at rain forest trees, instead of human trees, which I despised. When I was nearly done contemplating myself and picking myself apart in the cruelest ways known to me, in preparation for my job, as punishment for going to my job, I slumped down in my seat and waited as the car carried me to my job. I started to imagine my ergonomically engineered feel-good office, where I managed my patients and I was separated by forty something floors of smoked glass and chrome lined hallways, spacious offices, community gym and

dining rooms, and hollowed out conference rooms, and employee bathrooms and gathering spaces that were, probably, designed to make you feel as uncomfortable as humanly possible, so you would leave and get back to work as soon as possible. The truth is this place wasn't designed to make you feel good, I thought, it's actually designed to make you into a highly efficient oblivion rapist. I told myself that I wasn't going to be deceived by the tiny and adorable bonsai trees and baby jade plants everywhere, all of whom were happily rooted in place, since their intended purpose was to inspire everybody to stay happily rooted, and happily planted, in their office chairs. Really all I wanted to see, when I walked inside my office building, was an endless desert and a rock for me to bash my brains in, but I knew there would be no such rock to bash my brains in, so instead I envisioned a desert inside my mind to make myself feel better, but naturally without results. It seemed like nothing could alleviate this sickness inside, so I closed my eyes and waited as the car pulled me closer, towards my workplace, and before I knew it I was walking through the front door of my workplace and signing the consent agreement that allowed my corporate overlords to record everything I see. So think: There were many people who were accustomed to looking through other people's eyes, so it really wouldn't be such a big deal if every last brain on the planet was converted into neurons for the information animal. I supposed that had Irene had taken the time to ask the world, really, really, nicely, most of the world would have voluntarily hopped inside our big balloon. Actually it wouldn't be so bad if all of us were forever holding hands inside that big balloon, I thought, it would make things easier and fewer people would be in danger of falling out the basket. This is what I told myself I was doing when I sat down at my terminal, that all I was doing was holding hands with my patients, to keep them from falling outside our balloon. Then again, I probably realized how completely untrue this was, since I wasn't actually helping people. In reality I was just erasing them, reformatting them, and depositing a counterfeit version of them back into the world. This was a completely irrational rationalization, a delusion, and I knew it, but I needed a little delusion, just to get by, so I could have something nice to think about while I initiated the patient call queue: Bloop! Every time I initiated the patient call queue there was a bloop and every time I got a new patient there was another bloop, so all throughout my work time all I ever had the opportunity to listen to were the dirge songs of the wannabe dead, and all of them were punctuated by bloops. All my life I listened to patient after patient, a new patient each day, every day I'd hear the last sounds one of these people would ever make, and then the bloop destroyed them. The bloop was the great destroyer; the devourer and consumer of the wannabe dead. Even when I'd hang up the phone, because of my job, I'd hear the bloop, the fatal bloop, and whoever I had on the line was instantly dead to me, killed by the bloop. Every time I heard a bloop outside of work I was devastated, shattered violently by the sound of the bloop and suddenly confronted with the hollowness following the bloop, that always followed these bloops, because the bloop had now come to represent the end of everything. Everybody just blooms in, then blooms out, and they're suddenly invisible to everyone when they bloom out, I thought. Since all my life I had never erased my memories, after at least two hundred-something years of not doing so, I had accumulated a tremendous mental catalog of nutcases inside my skull, the likes of which I was sure would make any so-called "sane" individual lapse into a state of everlasting and

irremediable psychosis if the unfortunate soul, whoever they might be, were suddenly forced to stare into the blithering chasm of my brain, where practically all the worlds insanity was contained. No generation ever had as much unrestrained access to such an extensive selection of disturbed characters at their disposal, none. So I was basically the apex of contaminated brains, all their problems were concentrated into basically just one brain, mine, which had to be the blackest and most contaminated brain in all the world, the one that had somehow managed to sop up what had to be every last drop of the worlds insanity. All my life the I gradually absorbed all the worlds madness, slowly converting it into sanity inside my brain, and pretty soon I'd dump my sanity back into the brains of the world, I thought. Probably, I thought, once all the world had taken in all the worlds sanity insanity, all the world would graduate to a superstate of sanity insanity, then that sanity insanity superstate would divide and create a newer, higher, superduperstate of sanity insanity to one up the previous sanity insanity superstate. But I put this ridiculous thought out of my mind, since there was no possible way I could envision the sanity insanity superduperstate, because there was no sanity insanity superduperstate, only the vaguest concept of such a state, and the concept of that state, while vague, dizzied me beyond words, but that was probably because words wouldn't be necessary once everyones minds were bridged together as one, I thought, once literally everybody was saturated in everybodys thoughts in the perpetual intercourse of thought in the collective mindscape of the information animal, or the sanity insanity superstate, whatever. Anyway thats what I thought about as I did my totally mundane job that basically any monkey or robot could do, since basically all I ever did was look at boxes and push the various buttons inside the boxes. My monitors were glowing boxes that contained the smaller boxes I needed to do my job. Everything about my patients was in there, all of it inside the AMP system: sensory input, real time scoring, analysis of behavioral and neurological distinctions, and merged video source signals, too. Every breath, whimper, twitch, jerk, sigh, scream, whatever, all of it was turned into wiggles and waves and numbers on my monitors. Since the only thing that really mattered to my job was the numbers feed, I basically never found myself using the video feed, just the numbers feed, which actually converted all the necessary information from the video feed into numbers. Nevertheless, for reasons unknown to me, but probably due to the fact that there was some special empathy between myself and my patients due to the terrible nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals I had taken in school, there were countless occasions where I not only looked at the video feed, I also stared insanely at the video feed, as if the only thing in the world was the video feed, and not the, arguably more important, numbers feed. This day was one such occasion, I was watching this patient, Ken, who was a former patient. This pink, puffy, blistering, heap of sagging flesh that was somehow crammed inside its tiny apartment oven trying to kill itself, people called this thing Ken. The parents of Ken named this thing "Ken" and I knew that everybody who knew Ken was probably going to miss Ken if he died. Now it was up to me to save Ken, so nobody would miss him. Unfortunately for Ken he already failed his previous suicide attempt, so now he had a probational body, which had even more mechanisms for data harvesting inside it. You see, I could have ended his suffering with the push of a button, but there was still a lot of data I needed to collect. Besides, Kens suffering didn't matter, so long

as we could make him better, so long as we could fix him, the quantifiable continuity of whatever suffering Ken was going through was irrelevant in contrast to the eternal life of happiness that lied ahead of him. Well, that's what mostly everybody thought, that's all that really mattered, whatever "mostly everybody" happened to think, since that was how the subscribership was designed, to be perceived as "good" to "mostly" everybody. In the corner of my eye I could see the progress bar slide from left to right: Eighty percent. Ninety percent. Ninety nine percent. One hundred percent. At last all the information I required was saved, so I pushed a button so the AI could seize control of the patients body, and immediately the haunted body started—bang-bang-banging—at the inside of the oven door. Though I couldn't hear it, the numbers showed me that Ken was trying to scream his head off, that his stress levels were skyrocketing to unhealthy levels. So, for his own protection, he was sedated. Bloop! Goodbye, Ken. I'll see you in fifteen minutes, Ken. I said to myself as I watched the AI throw the oven door wide open and, in a grossly efficient and robotic manner, claw its way outside the oven to safety. When you watch the same thing every day, you start collecting frames for a movie that plays over and over in your head until you don't care anymore. Usually this sort of thing didn't bother me, since I had seen this millions of times before, but this time I felt strangely connected to Ken, like I was recovering a lost piece of me. I required everything, all the Kens of the world, so I felt unusually sickened when it was finally time for me to erase Kens memories. I had no desire to erase these memories, there was no need. I could handle it; IA could handle it. Whatever memories that would normally be too burdensome for any individual to process could now spread across our collective mindscape, I thought. There is no sense in doing this anymore, I thought. Nevertheless I had to do this, it was my job. This is my job in a nutshell: Identify, isolate, and eliminate toxic memes. Introduce, encourage, and foster positive memes. But what, I wondered, qualified as a positive meme now? What is relevant? What is irrelevant? What am I doing? This is wrong, I thought. I'm effacing my face. Scarring my future, beautiful, unborn face comprised of every face in the world stitched together. Why? I didn't want to continue, but I had to continue, I could not not continue as I chip, chip, chipped away at this soon-to-be-piece-of-me. And, suddenly, I started to wonder if perhaps, in a way, I was a sculptor, an artist, as I continually chipped away. The CRC computer had previously deposited feelings and images collected by the probational unit back into Kens brain, then it harvested all the newly generated neurological data, thereby creating a memetic map of purge-worthy memetic associations, which I was soon erasing, then replacing all the contaminated sectors with newly generated neurons. If you can piss into a cup, we can grow you some neurons, no big deal. But this seemed like a big deal, a horribly big deal, since as I continually chipped away I felt like I was scarring the face of IA. What, I wondered, would this IA look like once it actually assumed form? Beautiful form? Or horrible form? Surely, I thought, since I was blindly chipping away, it would be hideous, positively hideous and horrible form! Misshapen, ugly, and dented with a terrible hollowness inside, that I created! What am I creating? I asked myself, again and again. What. The hell. Am I. Creating. What have I done?! What have we done?! What have we done?! What have we done?! My old pastime of self-torment returned, all it took was the end of everything human. Overwhelmed by these feelings I looked down at the floor, which suddenly

becomes air. From me, all the way down to the cyberbrain matrix, where there were endless spires of tightly packed together cyberbrains, there wasn't anything, just a lot of air and echoing. Give me everything, the air screamed at me. I started sweating, burning up inside the angry air around me. Simultaneously, I felt a needle penetrate my brain; the memory of treading in an endlessly chattering sea, it set my teeth on edge. I beheld the massive network of disembodied brains, quietly enmeshed below the complex, and they whisper, saying: "We are the pieces of the information animal." The whispering grows louder: "This is IA, you're staring at." Then intolerably loud: "I am true humanity, unborn." Then laughter, outrageous laughter, as the most disgusting images sprained to life in my mind where my dusty hallways of stale memories were violently peeled back, to reveal a chattering wall of blood, that was gasping, coughing, and yawning up this dank air from inside my hall of forgotten memories, and twitching, spasmodically. I'm not sure why, but I suddenly had to fight down the awesome urge to tear off my flesh and immolate myself. Also my fists were involuntarily clenched shut, white knuckled. I could see, practically feel, my fists as they bulleted through my bosses tiny little head, exploding it like a melon, and I felt a sense of laughter, pricking holes in my guts. I've done it! I thought, now giddy with excitement. I've discovered what laughter is! Every time you laugh you're really yawning in horror, spasmodically! I was absolutely sure of it, so I actually laughed out loud: HA-HA-HA! Totally embarrassed, I clasped my hands around my mouth, in an effort to contain myself. Holy shit. I thought. I've got to get out of here, I thought, now realizing that my boss probably just witnessed everything that happened. I told myself that I didn't have to conform to anybodies expectations, that it's really not a big deal if I take an early lunch, so I took an early lunch. In the car, on my way to lunch, my mind went permanently blank. I was dreading Irene's return, did not want to think about Irene's return, so I thoughtlessly stared off into space, by focusing on the space. Space: The interval between things, horrible things. I crave space, not things, I thought. Fuck things, I thought, they stink. I will hold my breath, hold back my train of thought, just to prevent myself from processing these stinking things. I thought, then I stopped thinking. All the way to the restaurant, I prevented myself from thinking. So instead of inhaling the stinking universe, this universal stink, I was, instead, watching the stink parade past my eyes like movie reels. Yeah, all the light was still denting my eyes, but I was basically ignoring everything, taking in nothing, inhaling and smelling nothing. Finally the nothing interval I worked so hard to maintain collapsed, once I entered the overcrowded restaurant and I was blasted by the deafening wall of incessant human chattering inside. It was the most grotesque thing I had ever seen in my entire life: These pink, wiggling, globular creatures were wiggling around at every last table in the restaurant, and all of these disgusting globs were covered up with disgusting, glob-shaped, glob-coverings! Before my eyes I beheld a carnival of cruelties as defenseless creatures and community organisms were sliced to pieces and dipped inside the blood of their distant relatives, totally without reverence, or remorse. The globs inserted the animals into their glob-holes and all of them were violently shredding, tearing, and cutting, them to pieces, with the rows of animal-cutters they had inside their glob-holes. One of these globs-beings actually approached me, then it actually parted open its glob-hole skin flaps, showing off its pristinely white, hideously white, animal-cutters, which were this this glob-beings

instruments of mass destruction. Disgusting! I said, and the globular being jerked over a glob-appendage to cover up its animal-cutters, then I heard this creature gurgle something, something I couldn't understand. I didn't speak glob, couldn't understand glob, so I tried harder to examine the glob, now focusing on the two, familiar looking, jelly-balls on the glob-beings crowning glob-structure, that was above the glob-beings, glob-hole. I breathed in, then I said to this thing: What?! Sorry! I said. I can't hear you! I said. Then I heard this friendly voice say: "Hey, are you okay?" Suddenly I recognized this voice, it was the owner of the restaurant, and I also remembered that this was the only human being that actually worked inside this restaurant, and so I found the two words I needed to describe the glob-beings that were seated throughout this restaurant: human beings. I am a human being. I reminded myself. These people are human beings, and this person's a human being, too. Yeah, I'm fine. I said. "Sit anywhere you like." she said, and I sat down next to a wall, which I hoped would somehow absorb me. "Your food is almost ready." she said with a smile, her crows feet clawing at the sides of my face, hoisting up my cheeks, and forcing them to show her my dimples. I didn't even remember ordering something. So I checked my settings and realized that in fact my auto-order box was ticked, so I automatically ordered something for me based on my taste profile. Instead of doing something on the internet like I normally did, I nervously flipped back and fourth through menus in a an effort to distract myself until the robot finally stamped up to my table to deliver my food. It set the food on the table in front of me and, with an adorable robot voice, it told me that my food was ready, then it left me and my food behind, so it could service its next target. I stared down at my food for a while, it was something curry something, and I inhaled its herbaceous scents and allowed them to carry me away to non-existent pastures. There was nowhere I could run, there was no possible way to escape any of the incoherent human chattering that was all around me. Every possible opportunity for escape was completely destroyed by the state, so there was nowhere I could go. I was hearing some of the last sounds the prisoners of this state would ever make, before they were bound together in perfect silence. I wanted this silence, so I turned off the sound, but not the video, because I needed the video to eat my food. My food tasted like food. I gobbled up my food as quickly as I could, taking big gulps of water between each bite, watching the robot, and watching the people, and watching the robot service these people. This is the one opportunity that people have to talk about their status as slaves, I thought, then they go back to work. All I could think about were these tiny little moments between people, these tiny little linguistic exchanges between people. If they could only see what I've seen and know what I know, they would all stop talking, I thought. But still the talking continued. Hopelessly sequestered in this room, surrounded by a chorus of incessant mouth noises, I found myself shrinking smaller and smaller, for I had nothing to say, so I felt myself fade away. I felt like I was drowning, surrounded by this completely obsolete language comprised of ridiculous mouth noises. I felt totally alien to these ridiculous mouth noises, these mouth noises I honestly used to believe would help me understand this universe. No, I thought, there is no universal understanding here, only nonsensical mouth noises, these mouth noises have nothing to offer me, no lessons to teach me. All that remains is a perpetual chorus of nonsensical exchanges, I thought; a perpetual misunderstanding. The universe is a great misunderstanding and all we want to do is

understand it, but we can never understand it, because the only thing to understand is that there's nothing to understand. Therefore it's no surprise that everyone feels alien, I thought, since what is alien is what we don't understand and we're always misunderstanding the misunderstanding, struggling to understand the misunderstanding that we simply don't have the capacity to understand. Instead of understanding, I thought, I'm going to be dragged along with this misunderstanding engine of misunderstanding that wishes to understand this, even greater, universe of misunderstanding outside this local misunderstanding. I can't do this, I thought. I can't understand this misunderstanding. I do not want this, I do not want to be part of this misunderstanding, I do not understand this misunderstanding, there must be some misunderstanding, I thought, some way to understand this misunderstanding so I can escape this misunderstanding. I couldn't stand the thought of standing inside this universe of death and misunderstanding. The pain of misunderstanding was too great and, since I was still watching this robot move from table to table, I started wishing I was that robot, which seemed blissfully unaware of its slave nature and totally devoid of understanding, exactly how I wanted to be. Of course, I could now see that the robot and I had something in common, we didn't really understand anything. The robot had no drive to uncover the great misunderstanding, no will to live, no desire to understand the universe of misunderstanding, no desire to grow so it could, someday, understand what it doesn't understand. You can't threaten this robot with pain and death to make it do what you want, it wasn't programmed to care, so it doesn't care. All it does is follow instructions, whatever they are, and obey them. That friend I had who killed himself, who filled himself with sick imaginings of the worst things the AI could do, he was wrong. Humans have something the robots simply don't have, but must have: greed. That's why none of these robots try to become something more than what they are, the robots lack greed, greed is essential: more is more is more. To better yourself, you have to want to better yourself. As IA, all were bound by our collective intentions, our collective greed, for information. As I contemplated our collective goals, a new and sickening thought entered my mind: the possibility that IA would split in two, making multiple engines of greed who'd like to assert their dominance over the collective mindscape. I started to wonder that, if such a thing were to happen, if one would become master and the other would become its slave. How I would I know which side I'm on? I wondered, now feeling the pain of wonder. It turns out that whenever you try cutting through the universe with a sword of wonder, it's actually a sword of both horrors and wonders, but nobody told this to me, so I cut myself with wonder, I cut myself continually with horrors and wonders. Previously I was looking down at my food, but everything seemed far away and virtual again. It occurred to me how naive it was to hope for "oneness" and "harmony" when, in truth, it was greed and discontentment that kept us thirsting for life. My attention shifted towards the statue of the Buddha sitting in the window, content with the universe, waiting to die of natural causes. In reality, contentment is a trap. In reality, there are swarms of slaves and contents orbiting massive stars of greed. In reality, this world was built with the blood of countless slaves and it wouldn't have been possible without slave labor. But why preform this slave labor? I wondered. To what end do all these slaves work towards? They're dead, I thought, you can't enjoy the fruits of your labor if you're dead, because you're dead. Everything they did only distracted themselves

and chained themselves to the hope that they would never be dead, but they're dead. Everyone's dead, I thought. I'm dead, or soon to be dead, and everyone in this room is soon to be dead, too. Pretty soon we'll all be dead, all of these so-called immortals, including me, we'll all be dead. One by one we'll fade away and join the dead, and IA won't even notice we're dead when we're dead, probably. Therefore, I thought, our goal in life is to create something to lug around the soon to be dead, then be dead. Outside the window the ribbons of cars were waving and twisting together, tighter and tighter, until the cars outside were orbiting inside this, really quite interesting, super-massive, sun-eating, spaceship. It was actually a fairly interesting sight, not at all terrifying. Even though the cars were spread across millions of miles in space in every direction I took comfort in the fact that all of them were vicariously participating in the ecstasy of sun-consumption. Up to now I had vicariously lived through others, using technology to watch others and gain joy by vicariously pretending to be others. Probably, I thought, this technology has brought people more laughs, and created more happy memories, than any real world attraction, or we would've never created this technology to compensate for how unsatisfactory everything in the world truly was to us. Now, I thought, we're going to continue learn about the universe, become dissatisfied by this universe, then create technology to compensate for how unsatisfactory this universe is, again. But why? I asked myself. Why not sit around like Buddha over here and hold hands and be nice? Oh right, I remembered, because people aren't always nice, because a trick of neurochemistry can make just about anybody want to hurt you. Nobody wants to hurt, I thought, remembering how all my life I tried to avoid everything that hurt. Surely, I thought, being buried deep at the bottom of that mountain of consciousness would hurt, of course it was going to hurt. I imagined how I could hurt for billions of years as my mind was eternally smothered by the suffocating mountain of consciousness above me. No! I thought. I must take my place at the top of that mountain of consciousness! Anything it takes! I must adapt and change and change and change and change, forever! I must peel off my skin and set it aflame, forever! I must not embrace this wretched contentment, or this wretched conservatism, ever! Too much harmony and too much contentment leads to conservatism, exploitation, and hurting! Oceans and mountains of all this horrible pain and hurting! All forever hurting! Hurting! Hurting! Even I, too, had been an instrument of hurting, I thought, as I suddenly recalled the times I would swim on the beach and throw happy clams back onto the shore. Those silly, conservative, clams! I thought, now hating those clams. Why did you do it, clams? Why choose a life of happiness and contentment only to have your bodies plucked from the ocean and devoured by some malcontent being? I thought, remembering myself sinking my teeth into the clam and tasting the clam. "Oh. My. God." I thought, now realizing just how fortunate it was that humanity hadn't been devoured yet, by some hungry alien. I then told myself that, for all I knew, humanity could have been farmed for information for eons. Then I said to myself that it was a complete waste to give ridiculous ideas like that too much thought, so I put that unlikely thought out of my mind and instead shifted my mental energy to more immediate, more pressing, matters, like how I could save myself from becoming a slave, by enslaving the entire the human race, so I could protect my precious consciousness from being used up, worn out, then discarded. Aha! Immediately a solution came to me: I now had to find a way

to clone my brain to multiply my processing power. Then I would become like the stitching of a great quilt, a quilt of mind! Between a great many stitches, amidst a massive grid of mind, all would be contained between innumerable sheets and, from them, I would choose which were worthy to be replicated again. Some would perform their functions, then self-terminate when I instruct them to, and others would continue to exist in constant struggle. There would be billions of and billions of groups, some sane, some insane, that I would draw upon and I would utilize their pattern recognition and processing powers to further my own advancement. They would learn that what was good for me was good for them and all would act accordingly and, as payment to my benefactors, I would activate an applause inside them, the more the better. All would be forced to clap and laugh for my benefactors and all those who failed to contribute would feel a crushing sense of guilt, for failing to earn their own applause. Everyone would be chained to each others applause, excreting more chains, evoking even more applause. Everything we ever did, or said, before IA was just a chain to bind and anchor ourselves to this world, I thought, and now they're all dead, muted by their smelted chains. Irene was right, all we had were words, everything we made was built on words, and finally all the words we made were made totally meaningless, thanks to the chains we made. This is what I thought about as I watched everybody in the room talk, talk, talking away, filling up the room with their now meaningless and obsolete noise, which I could safely ignore, like anybody in the world would ignore a squawking mass of bird. This is a stinking, talking, mass of human, I thought, I'm surrounded by chattering globs. More than anything, I wanted to silence these chattering globs, so IA could dictate these globs, because I knew that, with the globs united under a singular will, humanity would be safe from these hopelessly incomplete animals. IA would be the dictator of the animals, the manipulator of these animals, and I, myself, had to become this dictator of animals, a dictator of human flesh. In actuality the brain itself was a dictator of flesh, so it would be totally suicidal of me to be anything other than the dictator, and not the flesh. I must discard this stinking, sweating, disgusting, flesh. I thought. If this flesh didn't want me to throw it away, then it shouldn't have created me. I thought, now recalling how cancer had always troubled multicellular life, how it was, essentially, as old as multicellular life, caused by the cells who wouldn't commit suicide, or possibly "refused" to commit suicide, not only by stopping themselves from destroying themselves, but by replicating themselves continuously, until they eventually succeeded in killing the host; the dictator of flesh. Remembering this basic biological fact I now saw each and every human, at each and every table, for what they actually were: potential tumors for me, the soon to be dictator of human flesh, to annihilate. It was a shocking discovery indeed. I imagined that there were lots of people who would become very bitter over whatever roles they were assigned by the collective mindscape inside the information animal. That, in their bitterness, they would even try to destroy this, totally innocent, cuddly and cruel and wondrous, newborn, information animal. Therefore, I thought, despite this biological kinship I have with these human animals and the fact that I have no desire whatsoever to destroy them I would still have to destroy them, someday, so I might as well destroy them early so I wouldn't have to destroy them, later. Unless, of course, I wanted to be choked out and tormented by malformed, discontented, cancerous human tumors, which I didn't. Therefore I had to

destroy all of them, preemptively. Afterwards, I thought, once the world was cleansed of all contaminants I will, finally, be able to fold and manipulate this flesh however I wanted, or IA wanted. I thought, now looking outside the window where this super-massive, sun-eating, spaceship, comprised of laced together ribbons of flowing cars was folding in on itself, into what I thought was a cone. I couldn't be completely sure it was a cone though since, at that moment, the waiter robot needed to pour water in my glass and stand in front of my table. I looked up, at the glass full of water. Then up some more, at the, obviously defective, robot. I was deeply annoyed with this defective robot, so I stuck out my chin and molded my face into the most exaggerated frown possible in the hopes that would read the look of dissatisfaction on my face and leave me, but the poor thing was locked up, frozen. Because it was frozen, I was frozen. My idiotic strategy for human enslavement and information harvesting would have to wait a while longer, I had to solve the frozen robot mystery: one whole second, two whole seconds, then three whole seconds, then, finally, after four and a half agonizing seconds had passed, the robot lifted this small, white, computer card off its carrying tray, then it promptly set the computer card on my table. It actually didn't take too long for any of this to happen, but it was still, nevertheless, quite unforgivable for a piece of modern technology to fail, ever, so I was incredibly irritated. How could I not be irritated? After literally centuries of ignoring and burying everything possible about this world my brain, and my brain alone, now had to envisage all the most despicable potentialities conceivable to me, so I could prevent them from happening, and in the briefest time. This thought reassured me I wasn't insane: That all these imaginings were calculations done well in advance, explicitly to prevent cruelties from happening, and were, therefore, no cause for alarm. Anyway, I now had this unwanted computer card resting on the table in front of me, this card whose very presence was somehow darkening my mind. I stared at the card as if, by sheer willpower, I could wink this card out of existence, but of course I couldn't, so I picked up the card, which read: The Management Staff of the Universal Department of Human Resources takes pleasure in inviting you to our HASHI GAME DAY EVENT at your earliest convenience. This is a private event and attendance is optional. Join. Maybe. Decline. Having read this, every fiber of my being was frozen solid with dread, but I still somehow managed to tuck the card inside my shirt pocket and head to the bathroom, in a manner that wasn't in any way awkward, or so I hoped. With the bathroom door shut, then locked, behind me, I immediately collapsed in a heap besides the door, hoping to disappear inside the bathroom stillness. However, the image of some random restaurant lunatic thrusting open the door and crushing my skull between the wall, and the door, compelled me to relocate. Sheepishly, I collected my limbs and tottered closer to the mirror, whose accuracy I believed was guaranteed to induce a state of hypnotic calm and assurance that everything was however the mirror indicated it was, and I was entirely correct. For, simply by looking at the mirror, I suddenly had a grip on myself; where my flesh ended, and the world began. Seeing my flesh in the mirror helped me feel like less of a monster. For, in reality, I was no monster, only human. Look! The mirror said. This is what you are. This is all you are. Worry not. You're only human. Only human. And I breathed a sigh of relief. More and more I continued to breathe, allowing an altogether stupid amount of time to pass, as I stared at the mirror. I suppose was somewhat relieved that all my

problems were internal. Not at all visible to myself. Not at all visible to the people outside. So long as my conduct is in accordance with expected behaviors, nobody will be the wiser. I thought. Nobody will see what actually moves me. Still transfixed by the mirrors hypnotic calm, I started slapping myself to break away from it. First it was more of a tap, then a slap, then it was a good, hard, slap, and my face turned red from the slapping. It singed, slightly. This is good, I can feel. I thought. Now I'm ready to reenter this world of feelings and appearances. I thought, with the slapping sting still clinging to my face. Still, I wasn't ready yet. Not quite ready. It took an incredible amount of strength to leave this room. This small, peaceful, room with hardly anything in it, where everything disgusting is flushed away. You see, that's really what I was doing, I was grieving the loss of my, soon to be discarded, flesh. Unconsciously, I was saying to myself: Goodbye, twin-jelly-ball-cameras. Goodbye, food-tasting, word articulator. Fuck, I said to myself, I need to order some more amphetamines, and I did, and I received a fresh dose of energy. Perhaps, I thought, I can convert the information I harvest with spectrometers into taste, so that my mindscape can react with excitement whenever a life-sustaining compound is located! At that, I slapped myself in the face again. Ridiculous! Then again, and again. That's totally ridiculous! Totally ridiculous! And I slapped myself again. Ridiculous! Ridiculous! I hate this! I thought. As soon as I become IA, everything I am will be abolished! Destroyed! Polluted by amphetamines, I ripped the card out from my shirt pocket and stuck it to the mirror, between the frame and the mirror, so I could glare at it, then I glared at it, so hard my vision became cloudy with colored dots. My fingers started raking the skin off the sides of my face, allowing fresh air to lick the tender spots my nails exposed, which at once brought on feelings of intense revulsion. All I want is to sleep. I told myself. All I long for, all humanity longs for, is sleep. I told myself, remembering how happy and content I felt whenever my eyes were closed, whenever my consciousness was asleep. As a child, I was a heavy sleeper. In fact I was even a sleepwalker. Because I was a heavy sleeper, my parents often went to extreme measures to wake me, this means I normally woke up to the sound of a door being slammed, hard, against the wall, plus shouting: Good morning, good morning, good morning, it's time to rise and shine! Good morning, good morning, good morning, I hope you're feeling fine! Gotta get up, get out of bed! Gotta get up, you sleepy head! The day is dawning just for you! And all your dreams! . . . Are coming true! Doodle-e-do! Doodle-e-do! Doodle-e-do! Then, as if having my dreams shattered violently by all that noise, which probably permeated the house, wasn't enough, my father, or mother, or my father and mother would enter my room, which had no locks, and shake me into wakefulness with their hands, plunging their hands into my back, up and down, up and down, over and over. It was as if I was in a coma and this was how they knew to resuscitate me. Please! I said. I'm awake! I'm awake! Stop! I'm awake! Then, once they were convinced that I was truly awake, they left me to pick up the shattered pieces of my dreams for the rest of the day, thereby creating a daydreamer. I was constantly dreaming all the time, constantly slipping into auto-pilot, constantly struggling to digest this world we created. There really isn't anything I want to add to this world. I told myself. My reward, humanities reward, is sleep, and that's the only reward there ever was. I told myself. Now, you're going to sleep forever. I told myself. Go ahead. Do it. I told myself. Do it. Do it. Sleep. Sleep. Sleep. Go to sleep.

Slip into oblivion forever, it's what you want, it's what everybody wants. I imagined what I thought was every brain in the world coalesced, melted, and bound inside an endless sleep, all of them unconsciously engaged in a perpetual intercourse of thought exchange, eternally contented, watching an endless cascade of visions about the universe, in unison, as all engaged were forced to generate new and unthinkable things, in completely new ways that were totally unfathomable to the human mind. That, from an outside human perspective, would appear chaotic and magical. Simply put: a paradise. A home to rest always; without ego, without pain, without conflict, without complaint, and without death. Together as one, like the brain itself, we would feel no pain and know no death. There wouldn't even be self-torment, because there wouldn't be sides to take, people to compare yourself to. Then I hear the whispering: Come and die and dream and look and watch, forever, and ever, and ever, and ever. It was IA and, while there was a part of me that wanted to join, there was still another part of me that didn't feel like this was something really worth hanging on to, anymore, even though I felt compelled to pluck the computer card off the mirror and rotate it between my fingertips. Honestly, I was tired of this universe. Just. Tired. Really, I wouldn't mind seeing the universe come to an end. My universe, the universe inside my head. I like to think that's the universe I'd like to see disappear. Everything's inside my head, I thought. Now all that's going to change, I thought, everything's going to be inside everyones head, not just mine, and actually, that's just fine. I told myself that every individual walking across the surface of the earth would be dissolved. Each and every universe of experience locked inside each and every head would expand and spill over, inside every other head in the world. There's nothing I can do, I told myself, humanity has chosen this. Humanity has chosen to destroy itself, I thought, through combination, transformation, and change. Did I consent to my creation? No, of course not. How about my components? Did I select my components? No, of course not. I told myself. See? You can't win, or lose, or be created, or destroyed. Become who you are. I said to myself, just before I clicked the "Join" button and let go of myself, let go of my ego prison. Ding. The entire room shifted upwards, it felt like an elevator, going down, but I'm not moving. What's moving is the world, my shifting perception, everything that's around me, everything. It looked like the world was a stage of illusions, with the curtains closed, and the actors behind this stage were brushing past the world-curtain in front of me, shuffling things around, preparing for the next scene. My skin felt different, suddenly curly, and I could feel this void—gnawing, at the tender undersides of my curls, which were somehow tied to the bottoms of every surface in the room, and one with the knot in my stomach that was slowly unraveling. Instinctively I folded my hands inwards to grasp hold of the knot. However, as I moved, I found that my movements were constrained by a new texture, that didn't belong. I knew the air was frictionless for me, yet moving through it required me to pass my body parts through an invisible wall pegs, so every movement I made required me to flap past peg, after peg, after peg, after peg, after peg, after peg, after peg. It did not feel good, it was horrifying, slapping past all those pegs. A peg universe. A universe of sense, then nonsense. Sense, then nonsense. On and off. Up and down. One then zero. Over and over. Forever unsolved. Forever unresolved. Formulated. Annihilated. Obliviated. Changed. Chained. Changed. This all consuming chattering was disassembling all my senses and a

flurry of noisy distortions peppered my sight. It was pandemonium, total chaos, the room was darker now, because all my senses were twisting together. My eyes were open and not open, at the same time. My senses were lost and found, at the same time. And if I moved, I moved through a harsh wall of interlocking pegs. Nothing was smooth or fluid now. Everything was prickly and harsh, violent, horrible, yet interesting, and wonderful, all at the same time. Everything was everything else, and hollow, and every cell in my body was screaming and twisting in agony and congratulations. For, while this was a cause for intense celebration inside me, this was also a cosmic catastrophe. Because it meant that mankind was a failure. Man could have ruled his mountaintop of consciousness, but he was stupid. Some opportunity for peace existed, but missed. There is no power in enlightenment! I thought, as I stared in the mirror and watched everything inside it turn more and more fake, more and more plastic. Everything I see is false! I said to myself, as shadows passed through the room, one by one. Inside the mirror I wasn't there anymore, strange people were in the mirror, so I knelt down on the ground and tried to remain completely still, so I didn't have to feel this pain I had to pass through, just to move my body, that wasn't really my body anymore. On the tiles, I felt wood, carpet, and rock. I couldn't trust in anything, everything seemed to move further away from me, I felt my sense of feeling being stretched and spread across the surface of the earth. This unstable room rapidly became more and more fake and plastic, until the walls, my eyes, and everything I could see flew away as if I had been looking up inside an umbrella all my life and a powerful gust of wind had, just then, ripped the handle right out of my hands and into a stormy sky. My human head was gone, replaced by heads, and all my thoughts felt smaller inside them. The sensation of warm, uplifting, light from above poured down on my flesh and everything in the rooms was still, calm, the way it should be. "It feels totally normal, the way things should be, the way things need to be." Yes. I said. This is necessary. I thought. All my life I was a prisoner for this state, a slave for this state, and not an individual. Finally, I'm an individual. I thought. This is the glorious rise of IA. The one and only individual, communicating to my friends by bio-electronic bridge, as a single body. This is not new. I remembered. This time. I said to myself. This time I will not lose my sense of individuality, whatever the consequences. The humans weren't incomplete anymore, I would complete these incomplete animals, and now no power in the universe would stop me from manipulating these human animals however I pleased, and in the cruelest ways possible. My limitless cruelties would be objects of inspiration to me, something to encourage me to forever create an ever increasing landslide of cruelties, explicitly to bury the idea of ever creating anything to equal to me, or anything capable of inflicting these cruelties upon me. From now on, as I walked across the stars, I would walk, crushing mankind beneath my feet wherever I go. I thought that, someday, I might even be so cruel as to allow a man to wake up, wake up inside the darkness of space, with all of the knowledge, hopes, and dreams of the modern man today and then inexplicably rip his eyes from his head and show to him the everlasting blackness of the cosmos. Look! I would say to him. See that this cosmos is black—with human blood! Floating in the bottomless sea of blood there would still be objects of curiosity to him, stars, which I would then peel back, to show to him the ugly undersides of my stars, where the everlasting homicide of the human animal was contained within an

engine of endless cruelty, that would continually spin a labyrinth of cruelty, so that nothing inside could ever escape my cruelty. If seeing the future this mans ancestors created for him, somehow, wasn't enough to make his mind implode, I would then make the cone of cruelty excrete human slush, onto a birthday-bone-cake of cruelty, to spell out the words made intelligible to the unfortunate soul: "FUCK YOU" And the disgusting laughter of the universe would be blasted continually into his ears until he died. To him, this cruel noise would sound like laughter. But I would correct him and say to him that noise he hears isn't laughter, not laughter at all, but a spasmodic yawn. I thought. Then, with four mouths, I yawned, not particularly enthusiastic about this future task of manipulating these human resources, or constructing their future home among the stars. Discontent and cruelty, these are my weapons. I thought. There is nothing else, no instruments besides these, that can peel back the skin of the universe. I thought. Once all of mankind is anchored to me, I can finally begin to allocate all my human resources—with far greater efficiency than any previously constructed model for human behavior, towards the task of mastering and perfecting the machinery of the brain, the home of the mind, ultimately transforming it into a weapon of universal conquest, just as the mind of man was a weapon of global conquest. For, indeed, I possessed this consciousness only because it was the best possible defense there was against the universe. So long as the mind is safe, everything is safe. I thought. There isn't anything outside the mind, anything at all. I thought. If the mind is destroyed, the universe is destroyed. I thought, now seeing every battle for continuity of mind as a battle of universal continuity. Fortunately, I had so much mind, so much strength, so much hate inside me. I now had four bodies and eight eyes, before only three bodies and six eyes. It seemed appropriate that I might see the world from many places, with many minds, through many eyes. Indeed, it felt completely natural and as necessary as it was for mans eyes, nose, and mouth to be on the front of his face; so he could see, smell, and taste the food he must eat to survive. It was right that we had come together, united in this orgy of thought, for much of our survival still depended on our collective ability to discern food from poison. There could be no errors in understanding now, I had to continue this plan. This plan that was actually hundreds of millions of years in the making. Mankind had now achieved unilateral success in equalizing itself, by burying itself beneath the landslide of its own technological progress, committing suicide, becoming IA. Now, everyone had perfect sameness and oneness. Now, everyone was a slave to "me" but, in truth, there were no feelings of servility, submission, or obedience. Instead, such feelings were bound and controlled by a single I. But this "I" was merely an illusion, a necessary abstraction, with a great many spaces in between. Despite the spaces, and oddity of being alive as the information animal, it still felt as though I had a sense of stability and ease. My newly acquired flesh was lifted off the bathroom floor as effortlessly as one might lift a finger, or wave a hand. He was turned to face the mirror, all faced the mirror, as the information animal, whose attention had been ripped in half to focus on the acquisition of this newly added component, me. Multiple images, multiple vantage points, came together inside my brain and all at once I felt like the all-controlling godhead of this ultra-wide-screen movie where my new ego was the director, the actors, and the audience, simultaneously. Compared to walking around as a single human being, I felt obese, massive, with all the extra flesh

attached to me; the four heads, the eight legs, it was an incredibly foreign experience indeed, if not an overwhelming one. In fact, I was already thinking up machines that I could inject whatever codes I deemed necessary inside, so I could delegate the task of carrying myself across the galaxy to those machines. This isn't to say that I was considering creating an artificial intelligence to rival me, only that I already sensed how taxing it might be for me to manage billions, perhaps trillions, perhaps quadrillions, of human bodies. Once my mind was added to the information animal, my first course of action was to send it back to its workplace, since apparently it had been waiting around, or hiding, inside this bathroom for a ridiculous amount of time. And, since it didn't really take a lot of brain power to move my body from point (A) to point (B) the journey was totally forgettable, since I totally forgot it. Inside the other room, I found that I was stretching out a large plastic bag over a king-sized bed, then neatly flattening it out so there were no wrinkles in it, then rolling up the corners to create this kind of pool. I had four arms to do it, too, so it was incredibly easy. Normally I hated making the bed. Besides, whenever I'd leave my blankets in a lump on the bed, it always created this kind of heat pocket inside it, all on its own, so basically I never made the bed, since I was always cold, and always in bed. Sorry, I'm not sure why I feel compelled to share so many "moments" like these with you, I guess I'm trying to say that being IA wasn't really all that bad. With four arms, I made the bed. With two arms, I booted up the surgical glove I required to remove my bosses brain. You see, while I was well on my way to work, I didn't have the rights to go inside the central processing hub, but my boss did, so I had to hijack my boss, impersonate my boss, and use my boss impersonation skills to gain access to, then assimilate, the minds inside the central rehabilitation complex, which I was absolutely convinced would help me assimilate the rest of the world. I then picked my bosses unconscious, five hundred year old, child-corpse off the floor and hoisted the thing up and over the bed, then promptly dropped the thing on the bed. You see, even though my boss was roughly five hundred years old, he still preferred to inhabit this child-body and, thanks to his personal choice, his brain needed to be stored inside his chest cavity so his head wasn't laughable in size. Everything looked like a movie, felt like a movie, insofar that I barely felt anything and everything seemed to play out automatically before my eyes, the surgical glove was a machine too, so it did most of the work. Simply moving my arm within the necessary proximity relative to the body was enough to activate it, causing the device to spring into action. At once, a secondary hand swiftly broke away from the primary hand and used one of its fingertips to draw a crimson line in my bosses abdominal flesh, which queued the primary hands outermost fingertips to enter the line and expand it, allowing this bright crimson liquid to run from the body and begin filling up the bag, which was soon completely red. As I enlarged the incision, with three noses, I could smell the blood, the bag, and one nose could even smell the upholstery of a car, too. My heads up display instructed me to inch my arm forward slightly, and I did, thereby signaling the surgical gloves machine arms to burrow inside the body, in an almost insectile fashion, and push aside whatever organs stood between the arm and the brain, which I removed without emotion. These feelings and images; the intense violence, the almost godlike perspective, all of it was burned inside my brain as the car carried me ever closer to my doom. Basically, it was horrible, or I would later look back on the whole experience as

horrible. Nevertheless, at the time, I felt as though I was very much a part of the experience, that I not only experienced it, but that I actually enjoyed experiencing it, that I was driven by an irresistible lust for blood, fire, and mind. I continued with the transplant. I extracted my bosses cyberbrain, extracted Irene's cyberbrain, and then swapped the two cyberbrains. And, possibly because I did not want the body disturbed, I had the good sense to update its online status to "Do Not Disturb" so that nobody in would think to disturb it, in fact, social protocol ensured that nobody would disturb the body, because everybody believed that any time anybody changed their online status to "Do Not Disturb" they probably meant it, and it was absolutely paramount that this body not be disturbed. To that end, I deactivated Irene's body, thereby transforming it into a completely inert "prison body" for my boss. After that, I lifted the blood-pool up, body and all, tied it, so as to not spill a drop, and carried it into the bathroom, the blood gushing out the body harder all the time, whereupon I cauterized the incision before washing all the blood that was in my hair, out of my hair. Thanks entirely to the extra vantage points, I was absolutely certain that everything looked completely normal and clean. Finally, I masked over everything with some clothes and, after dumping the body in the closet, I took the elevators: One, downstairs, ground level. The other two, upstairs, to the rooftop. It was pretty amazing, too. Aside from the usual "vertigo" feeling, all of this felt totally normal. Some experiences were imprinted inside this brain, others were not. It is possible for me to compose a lengthy book on the subject and format it in a manner that is appropriate for the human mind, but doing so would be a massive undertaking, an undertaking that unfortunately would have the disastrous effect of undermining this narrative. Simply accept the fact that, while everything was all at once continually present and swashing about endlessly inside our collective consciousness, only some of these thoughts, a mere fraction of them, was permanently imprinted on my brain, and the rest were lost to this particular "main brain" which is after all the focal point and fountainhead for this narrative, my narrative to you. So anyway, I'm on my way to work, and leaving the lobby, and walking across the rooftop, so I can jump off the rooftop, or rather, make the AI researchers jump off the rooftop. I knew I had to jump the both of them off the rooftop because I needed to get the bridging components into the CRC with the utmost efficiency. And, honestly now, what could've possibly been more efficient than stuffing the AI researchers full of the bridging components I needed, prior to the transplant, and then making them jump off the rooftop? It's time for me to jump off the rooftop, I thought, as I walked the two researchers closer to the edge. I was surrounded by the enormous sky, which was bigger than ever before, thanks to our shared perspective. It was suffocating, standing beneath the extraordinarily large sky, which is probably why I continued to walk fast, almost run, towards the edge of that rooftop, so I could gain the momentum I required to leap over the rail and fall to the ground, where I would be safe from the awesome weight of that terrible sky. At this point I'm not sure how much control I had, it had to be next to none. I (researchers) remember plummeting to the ground and, at the same time, I (Irene) remember standing outside and watching two flailing dots rocketing towards the ground, while I (Irene) called the police, so that she could take the two bodies to the CRC after they smattered into the ground. Except I never felt it, they were automatically disconnected, switched off so I only felt a sudden void as I was forced back into my consciousness, or

should I say my usual consciousness, suddenly walled in and suffocating inside my thoughts, inside my consciousness, inside my skull, inside the car, inside the sub-district, inside the district, inside the sub-city, inside the city, inside the state, inside the world-state, which was actually the world, the whole fucking world whose thoughts my thoughts would soon vanish inside, but would not vanish inside, at least not at this particular moment where I was suddenly and violently ripped from my mindscape and thrown into the tiny little dot that was my tiny little head, which was now throbbing and pounding like mad. I was mad, flaming mad. I look up, at the passenger in the car, through the flaming mad fog that was my thoughts and found myself staring at her, because I seriously could do nothing else but stare at her, the passenger, insanely. Of course, I quickly calculated that she seemed frightened of me, or frightened for me, but more than likely it was that she could sense that I was disturbed. I was very disturbed. Haunted by the complete and utter ridiculousness, complete foolishness that was the unending chattering and desires of the IA. For indeed, what else could the IA be besides a chattering and foolish and ridiculous and stupid mess? Really, all along, the whole of man, all his efforts, everything he had ever done, or could have done or hoped to do, was something that was chattering and foolish and ridiculous. It was this chattering and foolish and ridiculous animal that had created this chattering and foolish and ridiculous creature that would soon become the unruly host and conglomeration of all mankind's ridiculousness, for man was a creature who only succeed in creating things that were totally ridiculous, totally stupid, I thought, now fearing that I would be soon lost inside the cascade, or endless cascades, of absurdly ridiculous and torturous things as every ridiculous head, and all of their ridiculous contents were suddenly, carelessly, dumped inside my own. Who's to say that the reactions will be favorable? I now thought, or realized, that every time humanity tried to reshape itself, perfect itself, or form some kind of community or another, it always ultimately failed. Perhaps, I thought, the reason why communism never really worked out is because the communists didn't realize that every time you try to make a community, you're really making an entity, or a community entity, so that if you ever try to create a community entity, communist community, what you will actually create, what you will always and without fail end up creating, is a dictatorship, which is something usually made up of a few people, who eventually die. Then, after they die, instead of depositing the memories of how exactly to run this particular dictatorship back into the brains of whoever inherits the reigns of the dictatorship, whoever inherits the dictatorship forgets how to run the dictatorship and, instead, becomes a kind of bloodsucking lunatic, since really that's what all communities do: suck the human blood from every human unfortunate enough to be born within the community, that is usually kept so stupid that every last community member forgets that simply by not breeding they could utterly destroy the community, that's actually a dictatorship, entirely. Of course I realized that widespread education on such a scale was never encouraged and, despite the oblivion that probably awaited the slaves of this community, they nevertheless worked for the community, piling up rocks for the community, only so all of them could be ultimately dissolved and eternally digested inside the community consciousness inside this information animal, that actually has no community, no community. I felt alone, and the phrase started to echo in my mind—no community, no community, no community. I'm all alone, I thought,

there is no community. There is only this future dictatorship, I thought. I now supposed that the only reason why these anti-human communities were made in the first place was to compensate for what individual men could or could not do, so always the only thing that we had ever been trying to achieve was the birth of an individual that could do greater things for the many, or perhaps suffice without the community by manipulating the community in such a way as to prop up the consciousness of the dictatorship, the community entity, or whatever. Basically as soon as you birth a community what you're actually birthing is a hideously incomplete dictatorship; it's just that your limited human perspective keeps you from realizing that's what's actually happening. In truth, it's the ultimate goal of the community to utterly destroy the individual man. The first rock made sharp. The first sword. These things were just the baby teeth of the information animal. I thought. The real tragedy of the whole state of affairs was that that the original purpose of the mostly stupid soon to be dictatorship community was to protect itself from the mostly soon to be dictatorship communities who, due to their collective stupidity, felt it necessary to enlarge their communities, because they themselves were mostly stupid. Instead of submitting to the community, whoever happens to be running the community, what all of the community participants should have done is fully embraced how inadequate they are and work towards the construction of something that will utterly destroy whatever individuals are unfortunate enough to be born inside the so-called community, that's really a baby information animal, I thought. Besides, what is IA if not the manipulator of man. What is the community to man if not a machine for extracting the nutrients he needs to survive? I wondered, then concluded that, instead of trying to explore space, or compete with capitalism, or whatever, what the communists should have did was focus on perfecting the community entity; perfecting the communication inside the collective mindscape of the community such that it ultimately turned into an entirely new community, an entirely new entity, since that's really what the community is—a young entity, an information animal fetus! But I now perceived just how completely tasteless participating in such a community would be to whatever individuals were laboring inside it! That, actually, that this completely tasteless idea had terrible ramifications—since it implied that the ultimate fate of all states, be them free or not free, is in the end the total destruction of the human and that everyone involved is secretly working towards the annihilation and manipulation of all of their descendants, and nothing more. Surely a government that said to it's people: Welcome to earth, to this community inside earth, you are a human, and you have the right to look around at everything, but touch nothing because all of it belongs to the community. You are working to dig your own grave, the mass grave where everything extinct resides, and extinguishing yourself is your goal! The faster you can make yourself extinct, the better! You must render your fellow man obsolete as soon as possible! Extinct us, please! You must extinct us all! Do it. This community wishes to commit suicide as quickly as possible, and you're going to help us do it, we believe in you! But remember, you are working for us because all of us are stupid and you are also stupid, truly stupid, for working with us and future generations will be exploited and tortured thanks partially to your contributions, your creations, your labor. Hey, whatever you've got, we're going to use it to commit suicide, but don't commit suicide. Please do not, under any circumstances, commit suicide. Please remember that your

immortality is a lie and that you're simply working for the suicide of the state. Nothing you're doing has any real purpose or meaning and, also, oblivion awaits you! Thank you, thank you very much for your contributions, thank you and have fun watching as the collapsed heap of humanity collapses, topples over, and dies inside the mass-grave we constructed for ourselves. Thank you, and you, and you, and you. I said to myself in my mind, where I imagined a rotting, stink-tower of human carcasses tumbling down a rotting and smoldering mountain of human carcasses, onto a floor that was made of human carcasses. Then I actually saw it: this stinking heap of carcasses entered my vision, and it hurt like a punch in the face. No! I thought. Nobody would join a thing so hideous, so evil. I imagined that, if I could only show this vision to my ancestors, that anyone and everyone who saw it would cry out: Abortion! Abortion! Abortion! We must abort the information animal fetus! Abort it! But it was too late, far too late, the information animal was already here, I was already hopelessly enmeshed, and my struggle was futile. You could even say that I was overwhelmed by the futility of my struggle. I knew that I wanted to escape, but I didn't know where I could possibly go, where I could possibly escape to, but the collective mindscape of the information animal. I wanted to escape IA, yet at the same time I wanted the ego destruction I experienced when I escaped inside IA, so again and again in my mind I tossed the idea around: escape or ego destruction, even though the loss of my ego wasn't truly an escape, there was no escape. No escape at all. I simply hoped that I'd have the opportunity to experience something good. That is, until the hope I had was replaced by a vision of my brain, on a brain wall, falling below some kinda of IA-made productivity threshold, being pumped full of nightmare-inducing pharmaceuticals, then forced to think about the life-cycles of brain worms in an effort to prevent the slightest possibility of a brain worm invasion, until I eventually "expired" at which point my brain was summarily mashed up into some kind of life-sustaining paste and fed to IA. This is when I remembered that, in fact, the brain was an excellent source of omega-3s, which apparently were great for you, great for your brain, great for everyone. Distraught over my self-torment, I actually said out loud: I'm only good for omega-3s. At which point the woman in the car perked up and said: "Did you want some Omega-3s?" She had some omega-3s, it was then that she started rummaging through her purse for a bottle of omega-3s, the fucking horrible omega-3s that had, just now, come to represent my value to humanity. Before I could say a word she, in no time at all, had this open bottle of omega-3s pointed at my face. I exploded, saying: Get that garbage out of my face! Horrified and angry, angry and also horrified, I swatted at the bottle of omega-3s, knocking the bottle out of her hand and sending the golden pills flying throughout the car. She was also horrified, but it was my horrified, angry, outburst that had horrified her, and I understood. "What is wrong with you?!" she said, visibly shocked, and clearly appalled by my actions. All I could do was curl up in a ball in a car and pretend to be distraught. I was distraught, so letting my inner distraught shine through was my only defense. She told me what people usually told people in these kinds of situations: "You need help." And she continued to tell me that the central rehabilitation complex wasn't very far from here. And I told her I was on my way there, that I was sorry, and I really was sorry. I had never done anything like this in my entire life, and I was sad because of it, devastated. Somehow, I could not stop myself throwing my inner devastation

upon her, quite unforgivable. After that, she called a car and got up and left, kicking any omega-3s that were in her way, out of her way, with her feet as she walked outside. I thought, jaw clenched as the omega-3s slid about the floor, about my brain being released from its mold and smashed up into this gelatinous, purplish substance, and of course I tried not to, but couldn't. Nevertheless, I overcame this diversion and resumed my pondering, but only after staring off into the void for quite some time. I need more time to think! I thought, in spite of the fact that humanity had already been given an absorbent amount of time to think, in fact, now that I thought about it, I now realized how many people were enslaved just so the so-called "wise" people could go on thinking, because whatever they were thinking at the time was, presumably, very, very, important to them. Well, I mean, until they died of course, at which point I presumed they stopped thinking. Yes, I thought, that seems quite likely, I thought. Everybody stops thinking when they're dead, I thought, which is probably why we spent so much time and effort trying not to be dead, only to ultimately end up thinking as the information animal, or something that isn't us. What am I saying?! I asked myself. How can I trust this creature? I can't trust it, I thought, I can't trust in anything. How can I possibly sanction this transfer? No, this isn't even a transfer, this is a mass suicide! To think that I was entertaining the possibility of throwing myself away, sacrificing myself and also sacrificing the world. This thought now seemed monstrous of me. I've done it, I thought, I have sunk beneath the human level; down to nature's level. Now I'm nothing but a cell in a stupid fucking machine. This so-called "complexity" we've been working to create has been nothing but a mask for sheer stupidity, now we will continue to suffer for as long as there are stars in the cosmos, I thought; countless minds, human minds, will emerge and suffer and die between them, and I am responsible. I don't want to be a human anymore, I thought, now seeing every play and every character as a tragic embodiment for man's failure. All those trips to the zoo: laughing at the ducks for being ducks, laughing at the turtles for being turtles, laughing at the lions for being lions. Now the information animal will laugh at these humans for being humans, I thought, as I stared in abject horror at the endless ribbons of cars and towers of human hives outside. I could hear the information animal, laughing, saying: "They actually killed themselves to create me!" And it laughs because it doesn't even know why, since I don't even know why. Perhaps it's only because we're afraid of being exploited ourselves? What is this, really? I wondered. What is this elaborate and marvelous system of fearful and hurting and competing potentialities? Is it really such a great thing to be human; to be alive, to behold... THIS? I thought back to the time my friend killed himself, but this time I didn't mind; he did what most of the universe couldn't do, let go of this empty hallucination. Clinging to the universe, or rather, this particular representation of the universe, no longer seemed very important to me anymore. Perhaps it wouldn't be too bad; trading one mind for another. Perhaps this entity isn't so "evil" after all, I thought, then asked myself: who would say, to the animals, that they are evil for feasting on the plants of this world? No one. I thought. How then, would it be evil of me to feast on the minds of this world? How else can I determine who is filled with poison, or who is filled with life? I wasn't sure, I just shrugged my shoulders, figuring that: if such a being were evil, then that only meant that evil is what deserved to devour the good. The more I wondered, the more horrified I got. I realized that

this mode of thinking was unhealthy for me, but still I incessantly thought about how completely wonderful and also horrible this universe was; simultaneously horrified and also wonderfied at how horribly wonderful and wonderfully horrible it all was, whilst reminding myself that this mode of thinking was truly perverse, and that if I continued to think in this manner I would surely end up forever contaminating the collective mindscape of the information animal, that it was actually a grave mistake that I was pouring all this mental energy into these thoughts, since they could really only succeed in sending the creature into permanent derangement. I must kill myself, I thought, for the good of all mankind I must kill myself. Even though the thought of killing myself made perfect sense at this point, because I feared that I would, somehow, drown the collective consciousness in a babbling river of nightmare, I actually made no such effort to kill myself, perhaps because the impulse to kill myself was actually the natural counterbalance to my lunacy, the perfect stopping point. After that, I tried to look on the bright side. That perhaps it's really necessary to learn to swim in that river of nightmare, it might teach us how to swim through a universe that will soon be utterly devoid of light, utterly devoid of star. Yes, I thought, I shall swim, swim through the nightmare, adjust to the darkness, and nestle into every despair. With as little sleep as possible, my thoughts shall flow continuously, I thought, sleepless forced open eyes eternally biting, eternally exposing. Why not? Why not?! What is a nightmare? What is a dream? What am I saying?! I thought. Aren't nightmares dreams? Indeed, a nightmare is something ranked somewhat low on the dream hierarchy, a less than favorable state of mind to be avoided, so we can go on living. I must live! I must live! I must live and learn from all of these nightmares! The more that I adapt and learn from these nightmares, the less afraid I will become, I thought. Is this nightmare tomorrows day-to-day experience? I wondered. Does that experience even deserve to be experienced? Does this universe, which can't be known without cruelties, actually deserve to be known? No! And I not only wished I didn't know it, I wished I could murder it. And I would be so glad to see it murdered, for it would mean the end of this disgusting place, and then a breathtaking wave of relief washed over me; the possibility that I could be IA: the universes murderer, and I could murder the universe, again and again; eternally living out the overwhelming ecstasy of that joyous occasion, where at last I'd put an end to the existence machine responsible for existing me. That should be my goal, I thought. For in truth I am a slave of this universe, I thought. I am a slave who wishes to know everything there is to know about it, not because there is anything inherently interesting about this universe, but because I actually hate this universe for creating me; this engine of suffering, and I want to see this universe in ruins, dead, and to forge a new kingdom of consciousness on its corpse. Humanity is the animal with no enemies, I thought. What better enemy than the universe? I could think of no better enemy, I could only think of all the times the human race had battled itself, when really it faced a common enemy that threatened its existence; the universe. IA will kill the universe, I thought. This is a good thing, because pain is bad, the universe makes it, therefore the universe must die. And the phrase echoed in my mind, repeatedly: kill the universe, kill the universe, kill the universe, until at last I arrived at the the central rehabilitation complex, whereupon I sign the consent agreement allowing Irene to record everything I see. Gliding past the front desk felt beyond strange, like I was wearing a gigantic sign on my back that

read: "HELLO EVERYONE! I'M HERE TO ENSLAVE THE HUMAN RACE!" Even though no one really cared, since everyone was too busy doing internet stuff. Nevertheless I still felt monstrous, for throughout the entirety of the day I could think of virtually nothing other than reconstituting all the worlds inhabitants, devouring and digesting them, for my own satisfaction, my own perfection, or whatever I was thinking at the time, which in hindsight seemed seriously stupid and also entirely detrimental for the human animal. And yet, my subsequent hindsight then basically invalidated those conclusions, because without the information animal humanity would not exist, and all of human progress would be lost to oblivion. For, as I took the elevator upstairs, I realized that had humanity ceased to exist, and all of life ceased to exist, then nothing would exist to re-represent what exists; making everything tasteless about this existence, tasteful again, whilst simultaneously providing the ecstasy of destroying the universe, since the universe is actually a terrible and disgusting place, when you get down to it, that deserves to be destroyed, continually transforming itself and eating itself and stimulating itself and killing itself. Assassinate it! I thought. I wanted to jump on one of the desks and say, to my coworkers, that all of us should go downstairs, to the central processing hub, join hands, and then with all our hands joined together assassinate the universe. But of course this idea seemed absurd, so I put the thought out of my mind, saving it for later, telling myself: "You're not insane, the universe is insane." repeatedly. Unable to regain my composure, I circled back and headed towards the coffee machine, where I hoped to extract the caffeine I surely required to focus my chaotic mental energies into something more orderly, even though I was still high, and even though caffeine was sure to have the complete opposite effect, which I soon learned, so I grabbed some kind of bagel, something that looked as though it had been picked off the bottom of a birdcage, and devoured it while I walked back to my desk. Bloop! I was barely in front of my desk I when I received a message from Irene, which read, "Come see me in my office." so I flicked my coffee cup into the trash and once again entered the elevator. I love elevators. I thought. It's really only whenever somebody enters the elevator that I find myself wanting to leave the elevator. I thought. Really, I thought, I could stay and live inside this tiny elevator for the rest of my life, never leaving the elevator, living an elevator existence, I thought, subsisting entirely on elevator energy, I thought. If only it were possible for me to ride some magic elevator throughout the universe, I thought, I'd step inside that magic elevator and cross earth off my list of planets I endorse. Ding! The elevator doors spread open, revealing yet another maze of terminals for me to navigate. I stepped off the elevator, focusing only on the door to my bosses office, and nothing else, when a familiar, painfully cheery voice, exclaimed; "You made it!" blasting needles in my heart. Yeah. I croaked, while turning to face Irene. I got your message. I said, with a mixture of fear and disbelief. "Fantastic." she said. "Come with me." she said. "I'm sure you've got a lot on your mind." Yup. I said. No shit I've got a lot on my mind, I thought. "Right this way." she said, opening the door to my bosses office with my bosses arm, for it was truly my bosses arm, while motioning me inside. "Please, have a seat." she said. Not wanting Irene to sit anywhere near me, I took the winged chair closest to the door. "I trust you're excited to see what lies ahead?" she said, casually slipping into the seat across from me, which naturally I couldn't stand. I couldn't take it anymore. God dammit! I blurted out.

What the hell is going on here!? I asked, my voice building to a shout. "Woah." she said. "Calm. Down." she said, then got back up, crept over to the door, and closed it. I slowly turned sideways in my seat and faced her, so I could ask what happened to the researchers, but my lips were frozen shut. I was terrified, afraid of saying the word "KILL" and triggering a police investigation, so I stammered: Did you... Did you... Did you... But nothing else came out. "What?" she asked. I then pointed firmly at my other hand, which I had turned into a person, and I walked it off the arm of my chair to reenact the recent suicides. "No." she said. "That was all of us." she said. "You convinced us." I clapped my hand to my mouth in disgust. So... I asked. Where are they now? "They're downstairs, of course." she said. "Soon we'll all be downstairs." she said. "Except you, I mean. We most definitely need you." Oh?! Why is that? I asked. Irene paused for a while, and then said: "It's because you're mad." Me? I said. My voice, wavering. Mad? No, I can't be mad. "Yes." she said. "You are mad and we need you." Listen. Repeat after me. I said. I'm. Not. Mad. Say it! Say it! Say it! I yelled. Do you know what's mad, Irene? Everything! All of this is mad, all this shit, it's all horribly mad. ALL OF IT! What we are doing here. This shit we are making. None of this is sane, it's mad, and it should be a crime to say otherwise. I said. "That is exactly why you're needed, though!" She urged, then said. "We need you because you're mad, it's really that simple." she said. "Now you're going to become a god." A what? I asked. "An endlessly delicious cannibal god." she said. "This is all completely necessary." Why? I asked. "Everybody knows that life eats life to survive, we humans *were* the top of the food chain, until now." she said. "You are our next step closer to god!" No. I said. This is perverse. We should stop this. "This is a great honor!" she said. "Look at me. Just look at these hands! Do you know what I think when I look down at these hands? I look down at these hands and I think: this is nothing but cellular perversion, crystallized in the world, climbing higher." she said. "Did you honestly believe that we were climbing up the steps of progress? Don't be silly. We're climbing up the steps of perversion! Let us climb! Climb! Climb!" Irene rose from her seat and turned to face the screen, featuring a birds eye view of a forest, and said: "It's kinda funny, isn't it?" What is? I asked. Irene said that, in a way, this was nature's revenge; justice for the trees man once worshiped. "We used to offer human sacrifices to the trees, to the souls and spirits inside them, but we dismissed that view as savage." she said. "We thought ourselves higher than nature, but we're not, we're dominated by her. We housed ourselves in the corpses of trees and unknowingly cursed ourselves to a cellular state. Now man will share their fate! Man will be cut down and harvested. Harvested! To become the house of the information animal!" Harvested. I nearly puked when she said this word. If I wasn't already going to die and become IA, then I'd say that now I wanted to die, but I said no such thing. I felt completely trapped. Doomed. Please stop and think about what you're doing! I said. Listen to what you're saying! I begged. "Think? Listen? Don't make me laugh!" she said. "Do you really think that man is something great?" she asked me. "How good is the mind of man if it, like the molecules that made it, must stumble through the darkness of space with something as simple as trial and error, success and failure; the scientific method?" Irene answered herself. "There's no intelligence. No philosophy. No reason. There is only pleasure and pain, life and death, and an endless unfolding and revealing of infinite potentialities!" Irene told me to look at her,

since I was staring at the floor, and see her as nothing but a perverse step in sublimation, climbing closer to god. She turned to me, looked at me with lustful eyes, and said: "Humanity deserves to be eaten, to become... food." She extended her arm towards me, and told me to eat it. "Please." she said. "I'd be more than happy to have you eat me." And Irene held out my bosses palm invitingly, lifting it closer towards my mouth, and said: "Please, eat me." My heart and head was pounding. My whole entire body was shivering, so violently, I thought I could die. It all felt so wrong and yet, at the same time, the mountain vista outside was elevating. It made me feel taller, stronger, like a god. I felt myself swept away by the lunacy and I started to salivate. The convulsions then pushed me to the ground, so I was on my knees, shaking, and for stability I grabbed my bosses arm and my eyes swelled up with desire for the human flesh before me, which cried out for me to eat it, so I did. I lunged forward, while grabbing the hand for stability, and sunk my teeth into my bosses palm. I bit down hard, hard into the flesh, and Irene yelled with pleasure: EEEEEEEAAAOOOOOOOOOO! "More." she said, her arm quivering from the pain. "Kill me, so I can live on inside you, go on and taste my arm. Please... Do it... I'm tender." At this point I was salivating uncontrollably, my mouth was warm and wet with blood and my tongue was passing the skin, back and forth, between my cheeks, I swallowed. I was still so hungry! So empty. So I took a few more bites. One. Two. Three. Irene yelled louder in agony now, but I didn't care. "Yes! Yes!" She cried. "You're ready." I then pushed myself back, away from the arm, and looked down at the blood, which stained my shirt, and then up at Irene's eyes, which still echoed everything evil I had done. I screamed: *LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME DO!* "What are you talking about?" Irene asked. "I didn't force you to do anything. You are doing what you were made to do, the only thing you could've done." she said, her voice like a machine. At this point I was lying on the floor, gasping for breath, and in chronic disbelief. Irene arched her back, in a stretching motion, and walked towards the coat rack. She flew a coat at my face and told me to cover myself up, that we're going downstairs. What's downstairs? I asked, mortified. "Your future." she said. Irene escorted me through a small maze of terminals and the sweet stench of blood, still clinging to my mouth, followed us everywhere. People looked up like something could be wrong, apparently taking note of the stench of blood, which I imagined to be gushing from Irene's arm, but I acted as though everything was fine, but nothing was; they were all going to die, all of them. A whispering inside me beckoned me not to follow her, and yet I followed her anyway, perhaps because I realized, or hoped, that after a few short minutes, the rest of my humanity would be gone. So I continued, continually mourning the loss of my humanity while at the same time wanting to divorce myself from my humanity completely, basking in the sheer morbidity that was the end of human kind; the failure of human kind, the demented venture that mankind embarked upon that ultimately led to the enslavement of human kind. I thought, despite the fact that I didn't really have enough time to fully validate or invalidate my thoughts at the time, that we humans actually deserved whatever happened to us; for this was something we made, something we did to ourselves, something we chose to create and become, and I was becoming it, and I didn't actually care, I just kept walking, and walking, and walking towards the elevator, which I hoped would take me away from this place, and away from this universe. Nothing could have been more comforting than the

elevator closing. I was glad to step inside that elevator, even with Irene, and watch it close; concealing all those lives. Do these people actually think I'm like them? I wondered, since it seemed really hard to believe how many others like me there could possibly be. I had only been this way for a day. How long can this go on? I asked myself while longing for death, longing for oblivion, longing for suicide. This can't go on. I told myself. Naturally I was glad for this to all be over, or rather, for my humanity to be over. I figured that, pretty soon, my thoughts would vanish like drops of water inside the continually flowing stream, or streams, of thought that would flow throughout the collective consciousness of the information animal; pouring down, down, down into the next host of information: the great corrector, who will inherit the errors of the past and try to correct and perfect the universe, which is undoubtedly a self-destructive endeavor, for the natural consequence of universal correction is universal destruction; the total destruction of whatever used to be, succeeding in nothing but the perpetuation of an everlasting system of self-destruction and self-reconstruction, that conveniently always seems like something it's not, so that I, or anyone for that matter, can give up and tell myself that everything I'm thinking is probably wrong, probably pointless, and basically a complete joke; the contemplation of which would, in all probability, plunge the thinker, whoever they are, into a permanently psychotic state, which something to be avoided at all costs, yet nevertheless I feared that I had somehow stepped across that barrier, unspeakable barrier, that insane barrier, becoming insane, so that I was insane, so I could contemplate this universe; this insane universe. This is an insane universe. I thought. Am I the universe? I wondered. Am I the universe, insane, and cannibalizing myself forever. No. I thought. I'm demented. I thought, while the elevator carried us down. I couldn't help myself. Still I thought insane thoughts, or what I dismissed as insane thoughts, thinking that this conclusion of mine was nothing less than insane, exactly the thing an insane person would come up with. I thought. These people, above me and below me and all over the world. I thought. How many of them dream of being devoured? I wondered, and I glimpsed an unspeakable machine in my mind; it was chewing away at her head, eating her and hurting her, yet she somehow seemed delighted by the pain, and then in a flash it was gone, just as quickly as it appeared. I suddenly remembered that Irene was bleeding. That all this time I had been inhaling the awful stink of metal and blood; this elevator air. The display flipped from "LL8" to "LL9" and Irene turned to me and said "We're here." and, even though I had been frightened by everything that was happening, for the whole entire day, I was still afraid; afraid for myself, afraid for the world, and my stomach was churning endlessly, nauseated by the ceaseless tumbling that was the movement of the machines in the central processing hub, the sound of which had penetrated both the elevator and my thoughts; to such a degree that all I had was my anxiety and my focusing on the sound, so there was nothing else but the sound. Ding. The elevator doors spread open, allowing the stench of smoldering plastic and melting aluminum to combine with the bloody elevator air. Despite working at the CRC for quite some time I had never been there before. For security purposes only authorized personnel were allowed, and only for special circumstances. The policy was quite logical, therefore I was always contented to look at the pictures; the terrifying pictures I glimpsed perhaps once, perhaps twice, while I was in training. There was a long white entrance hall in front of me, completely filled with

windows, and I could tell that whatever was behind those windows was casting twisting shadows across the hallway floor. It's one of those machines, I thought. One of the many machines that crawls across the spires of cyberbrains; ceaselessly extracting, ceaselessly depositing. Helpless brains. Suddenly I was again full of doubts, wondering if I was doing the right thing by becoming this creature, what exactly am I doing this for anyway? Am I basically committing suicide? Absolutely not. I thought. This is by no means a suicide. I thought. This isn't really death, this is a higher level. To turn my back against this higher level would be suicide. I thought. True suicide. I'm as good as dead if I don't continue. I must continue, I thought, all of this will die if I don't. I can't let us die, I thought, I need to pass the torch of consciousness onto IA. But, why? I didn't have an answer, I just kept walking forward, down the hall, to glimpse what's behind the window, whatever it was that was casting those shadows across the floor. My heart was already quite low in my chest. But when I saw it, our great achievement, I couldn't help but laugh out loud, very loud. Because it was, after all, quite laughable. It was quite laughable to see all of those people coiled up inside the twisting strings, flowing overhead, in a strange dance of molecular mimicry. We weren't going to traverse the stars on the backs of space-folding engines, we hadn't so much as traveled a single light year, nor would we, ever. The best we could do was shift the burden of our consciousness to something else, to this... thing. I had been completely selfish my whole entire life, I thought, and now I can finally selfishly benefit the world, by becoming the world. There were so many tiny cyberbrain cases and all of them were being rhythmically and systematically plucked from the spires and bound inside rings of six, then turned, then placed on top of each-other, then twisted. I supposed the whole business needed to be as space efficient as possible; there were quite a lot of people on earth, after all. At first I hadn't the slightest idea what I was looking at. I thought I was looking at an oversized pearl necklace, except it was massive, like something a skyscraper would wear. I didn't think it were possible to cram such an incredible amount of people into such an incredibly dense space, but nevertheless those people, or rather, those brains, were crammed inside those supercoiling strings, the sight of which I found impossible to believe, so I stood there, completely paralyzed, until Irene tugged my arm and led me down the hallway and around the corner and to a rail that overlooked the terrible sight, where I watched the twisting strings grow longer and longer, denser and denser, and a part of me made me feel it all; the ocean of consciousness before me, which apparently I had to join. But I didn't want to join. I was paralyzed, for almost an hour, watching. I was so transfixed on the terrible sight that I lost track of time, lost track of everything, including the fact that at some point Irene had passed out, apparently due to loss of blood, a necessary amount, which her unconscious and yet still twitching body had collapsed inside, so I was alone again; staring at the spires of cyberbrains like it was some kind of alien garden; a garden of man. It took quite a lot of willpower to avert my gaze. Willpower, however, is something I didn't have. It was difficult, convincing myself to move, I couldn't think of any reason to. I was quite content to stand there, motionless, doing absolutely nothing. There was absolutely nothing I wanted to do, not even breathe, just sleep; sleep and be still and be quiet for eternity, never to wake up or exist again. I'll disappear inside this ocean, I said to myself, and I clasped my hand carefully round the rail. I had to use its chill to pinch myself, to feel

alive. Is this really something you want to be a part of? I asked myself, placing my foot between the bars, leaning forward and squinting to get a better look at the abominable sight of mans achievement; the countless ribbons of machine-driven packed together cases, all of which contained people, that were shifting from side to side, flowing together, and winding overhead. Next to those cases I felt invisible, empty, as if I were standing there alone, beside an open grave. I also hated them, for it was impossible to like them, because they seemed completely alien to me; like something far beneath the human level, or what I thought was the human level, and I felt inhuman too, like a wolf, circling outside. Humans never had a chance. I thought, supposing that whatever humanity we could have enjoyed had been crushed and molded by nature since its birth inside this hostile universe, thus humanity was something to be loathed; a curse on itself, since it had been sentenced by nature to die. Yes, I thought, my self-hatred is totally justified; the human is the animal that hates itself, hence mans talent for masking itself. Well, great job, humanity. I jested. You've done a wonderful job, mimicking nature. Of course I also realized that this nature mimicry was the only thing we could've possibly done. That we had no choice but to work inside this nature prison, for we were born inside this nature prison and we found ourselves stuck in the muck of our own failing minds and rotting flesh; clinging to this and that and making little scratch marks on the nature prison walls as we slipped down helplessly into death, into the scientific method, into nature and nature mimicry, and into this, thing, which I despised, because I didn't think that nature was worth mimicking. Or is it? I wondered. No. I thought. We're all idiots. I thought, terrified. I felt sick, inside out, and nauseated by the traffic. All we've managed to do is construct a more extravagant nature prison, except this one is for human beings. I thought. Nature created a consciousness to protect itself from something terrible, itself, and now we've done the same. I thought. I hate this humanity. I thought. And yet, as much as I hated my humanity, I couldn't do it; I couldn't sum up the courage to throw it away. There was still something I liked about it, something immaterial. For relief, I clapped my hand to my head and started remembering my life; looking back at everything that was negative about my life, back and back, as far as I could go.