

## PART THREE: 1. THE CUBE: THEA

It was accelerating—ATLANTA—the summer ecstasy would peak—it was cheap, it was legal, it was pure. It was everywhere.

I arrived after a three months session of Danish cognitive therapy—oblivious to the whole thing. It would continue without me save for a brief look, a shorter laugh.

On the streets you could sell yourself for a hinge of ease—the boys yelling no action, no action, she jingling her keys around the door—you followed—home like a cat, devious and lapping up the drops she slipped—she needed enough for the next day—but for you it was all free—until you could no longer bargain your rep for a cup of coffee—in another state you'd cut your throat how you arrived here—with just enough time to do your hair.

He balanced his head as the cutter did his hair.

Buffalo Lonnie gave that snort as another kid worked his way into the overcrowded hotel room.

—Why's it so dark in here?.

—I like it that way.

—You're a real nut case.

—You want me to beat the shit out of you, you little fuck.

Lonnie's hench man Big Steve looked on. Steve was a road boy tried and true. Still very country, but all the wiles of a big city hustler.

*-I don't suck dick or anything. It's not like I'm a fag. It's just that I'm sometimes strapped for cash.*

Ron was in the corner rolling a joint for himself. Ronnie was the connection to the kids. They still thought of him as one of their own. That's why they trusted Buffalo.

Lynn, Buffalo's sweetie, was in the bathtub with the door open. Candles lit all around the place.

—Who the fuck's at the door?

—One of Ronnie's friends.

—Maybe you could send one of those freaks in here to wash my back.

—Or lick you up.

—You are a mother fucker, Lonnie.

—That's why you love me.

She loved him because he got her high all the time. She started smoking rock when Lonnie told her that it was better for her figure than dope. She was just hanging on. Trying not to give in to her rural upbringing. But serving this sadistic bastard with all his whims.

—Bitch, I'm hungry. Go get me a fucking pizza.

—Get them to deliver.

—Not now. Aren't you good for anything.

—I wonder.

—Get out of here before I have second thoughts. The kids couldn't see it, but in one

corner of the room he had loads of cash. Everything from mounds of single to piles of hundred. Then there was a slew of cash that hadn't even been sorted.

–Lonnie, don't you ever leave this place. You're looking so white. Your skin is just going to dry up and peel off.

–What kind of shit are you trying to play on me? I'm not going to give you this stuff any cheaper.

–Ronnie, are you going to be out tonight.

Ronnie looked at the scrawny death rock kid.

–I'm thinking.

They all wondered if Ronnie was going to have something to keep the party going. The kid could only offer a few bucks for Lonnie's stash.

–Now that you got your shit, hit the road, kid, because you don't have enough to hang around here any longer.

The kid slammed the door and the room returned to its subterranean feel.

–I'm going to have to take off now too.

–You're always welcome here.

–Thanks, Lonnie. How does a maid ever make her way through this mess?

–She doesn't. They've got order at the desk not to let anyone in the room.

–They've got to suspect that something is going on.

–I'm working the owner and the manager.

Stevo had been silent the whole time.

–You got to get rid of these pizza boxes. They're getting rank.

–Can't you do anything around here, bitch.

–Bitch. You're the bitch here.

Stevo was a tough fuck. But no one dared cross Lonnie. Steve had seen Lonnie bring this seven foot monster to tears by slashing his face. On the street you had nothing to lose, so it didn't make any difference. But Lonnie had crawled out of a hole that bred the rats and the cockroaches, so that even the vermin were a step up for him.

Stevo never crossed Lonnie. No one did. His reputation was well known. And when it wasn't, Lonnie knew how to give a lesson in history. This was an empire. And Lonnie thought about a dynasty. Stevo wasn't no heir. Lonnie had big plans. But for the moment, he rolled a doobie and just chilled out.

Ronnie had blown in from nowhere to excite the scene. If you scanned him head to foot, you'd see someone who had no business trying to crack the Edwardians. He lacked the flair. And physically, he hardly made up for it. He had sexual appetites but seemed somewhat impaired by a slight performance anxiety. That was probably his attachment to the stuff. The lovely rumor—the big lie, how he had rode some guy for days.

He was just a few steps from street hustler. But he had a way. He didn't want to be a Lonnie or a Stevo or any one of the little fucks who were always scoring from the motel room. He wanted to exude mystery even for the most committed hipsters. He was the new Kerouac. Sort of a poet to the whole thing. Never able to get the words right. But living it in a way that everyone thought that they understood. That they knew what he was all about. And so instant

acceptance. His clothes seemed so much better than they were—he had a uniform. And his looks were stunning enough to have everyone turn their heads. He captured the immediacy of this world. He was now, today, and forever.

—What’s that blitz thing?

Even if he was off the mark and years late, he was the next thing. Like he’d always be in the right place wherever he was. And he’d learn from enough experience. Dirty, grimy experience. It would rub off on him. But the grime would seem more like a shine. And he’d have just enough to go on to the next phase.

Some of the gang hated him. Hated the fact that the Count had been drawn to him. But no one could get over that stamp of approval. The court had spoken and everyone went along. This was almost a key pronouncement from the Count that spoke to his ascendancy. If Ronnie knew, then he knew it too. And they all would have to learn from the same school. Sure, the Count was risking his legacy. But he also knew how the group was facing extinction. All their haunts seemed exhausted. This wasn’t a group that could give itself to tripping all the time. And ecstasy was becoming just a little common.

At first, they never thought of themselves as a drug set. This was why the Count had someone stayed in the shadows. He thought of his life as a work of art, but beside that, he had no real talent. He dabbled at doing hair. There he could pick up making some money. He wanted something of more glamor and less work. He had done some photography. Real pedestrian stuff for some salons. Some pics at hair shows. Got paid enough to think of himself as a professional. But he liked the lifestyle too much. And he couldn’t score jack fast enough to support his tastes for fashion and his love of long nights.

—You could be a model.

—I might look fantastic in a new jacket. But be honest. I don’t have the face.

—That isn’t what your lovers have told you.

—Maybe my visage may say prowess, but I sort of think that I crack the lens face.

Besides, you’re just trying to flatter me.

When he first met Ronnie, he had written in his name on the long list of hipsters that he had encountered since first joining the scene. This was the source of the Count’s dominion. A desire to know and be known. He had put little flourishes around Ronnie’s name.

—That guy looks like a farmer.

He gave Ronnie a look.

—What farmer? I see an angel.

They all laughed.

—The only place that he’s going to fly is when he’s on his knees sucking your cock in the bathroom.

—Let’s try that.

One of the gang had a joint and they all retired to smoke with their new found friend Ronnie.

—Why do we always go into the women’s washroom.

—Yeah, there’s enough bitches in here already.

—Who the fuck are you?

- Who blew you in here. The Wicked Witches of Dunwoody?
- I thought that women were catty.
- Honey, you better stuff it, or we’re going to send you out of here on the broom that you rode in here on.
- So this is Southern hospitality.
- You’re in the city now. And we know how to take care of things city style!

## TEX

- The voice was muffled on the phone.
- Can you please repeat what you said.
- I’m cold as hell in this place.
- It’s got to be almost 100 degrees out.
- Yeah, and I’m in this all night grocery and it’s cold for the ice cream.
- I really don’t like ice cream.
- Well, neither do I. At least not at this minute. That’s not why I’m here. I’m here because you’re supposed to be here.
- Supposed to be. Who the hell do you think you’re talking to?
- I’m not trying to be rude. I was just told to come here and wait. It’s cold as shit in here. And they told me that you’d be here.
- I’m not going to be going out again. I’ve got a bunch of movies here that I’m going to watch. Then I’m going to get a massage and crash.
- But I was told that you could do me a favor. Just come on by.
- I don’t know you from Adam.
- I know the code word.
- What are you talking about.
- You’ve got a Lamborghini. You like to drive fast. Always accelerating. Never coming down.
- You like that, sweetie. I’m still not coming out for you.
- You said it yourself. It’s a hundred or so out there. And you want an ice cream drink.
- I’ve done enough for the night.
- I feel stranded. Like I’m a castaway on the ocean. Just come and get me. For once.
- I know who sent you. I know what this is all about. But you’re not going to get me out.
- He said, like. you know, man, shit, you owe him a favor.
- I owe him not you.
- But he said that you’d help.
- It’s 3AM. I don’t like how this sounds. I don’t do charity cases.
- I can get you a good return.
- Listen, bitch. I don’t know what the fuck you’re up to. I’m not leaving this house any time soon.
- He licked his lips. The artificial air made them dry. It wasn’t working. He wasn’t

getting through.

–Something just stinks like shit about you. About all your bull shit.

–Just once. It’s nothing.

–Nothing? You know what nothing is?

–I’d appreciate. I’ll owe you!

His pitch was getting more refined. He had all the signs. The chill. His eyes popping out of his head. The slurred speech. No one would know the difference.

On the store PA they were playing *Boy*. He could remember bopping with some girl in her bedroom to their song. Better days. Those were better days. He was less obvious then

He just had to hold on. He just had to keep to the script. It would be all right in time.

It wasn’t time to page him again. He had to hold on. It would all work out in the end.

He wasn’t alone.

He stumbled to the cashier.

–What do you have in your basket?

He had enough food for a year. As the clerk rings up the groceries, he realizes that he doesn’t have enough money.

–You’re going to have to put something back

–Like what?

She glanced at the door.

–Don’t I know you.

I held in the threshold just long to burn an impression.

–It’s that guy!

–What brought you out on a Tuesday?

–I’m nursing a headache.

–Is it working?

–Not really. Not yet.

–I’ve got something that can help.

–That’s not me. Not yet. It’s bad but not that bad.

He edged in close to her. She let him stay there for a moment. Just to reassure herself. then she moved further down the bar.

–Can I buy you another drink?

–It wouldn’t hurt.

–What is it?

### *THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE*

$\tau > \phi(\sigma, w)$     *You decide to stay out. You have to avoid the representation of WORK.*

$\tau < \phi(\sigma, w)$     *Time to go home.*

I could feel myself breaking down and giving in.  
 –I really like you.  
 I touched her on the cheek. She brushed aside my caress.  
 –Not that way. Do you want to go somewhere?  
 –I don't know.

SOURCE 1  
 work

SOURCE 2

–I was folding shirts all day in preparation for an inventory. It was a breeze. They've got me on management training. Told me that I'm the best that ever took the entry exam. I was always good with tests.

She was still biting her lip.  
 –Let me get you something to drink. Some water. A coke.  
 –Get me a gin and tonic.  
 –Do you work in the morning.  
 –Yeah!. But I told you. Today was a breeze. And tomorrow.  
 –Aren't you going to have to concentrate.  
 –That'll be a snap.  
 –Here's your drink.  
 –Do you ever feel that tonight's the night.  
 –Whatever do you mean?

She looked at me intently. Focusing all her energy. At the same time, she just looked past me.

–I'm going to need some help if I'm going to do tomorrow. I'll be back in a minute.

**–Something's changed seriously in this place. Look at her. They couldn't do it before. Couldn't come here. Their devotion to their nine to five, everything in its place. Now we're in their place.**

–That's silly.

**–No, honestly. How do you think that she makes it every day. It's not magic or meditation. She gets help.**

–Is everyone like that?

–Ultimately. How else can you walk the edge. Look so damn good.

–I wish it wasn't so hard trying to pay for my place.

–Is it posh? Do you live up North.

She nodded.

–I need a room mate.

**–Isn't this how it all gets started?**

She flinched as if she had just heard something weird.

–I really like my place. I'm use to living in a certain style.

–You'll adapt. It not what you see. It's what you think that you see. You'll realize that the more that you come here.

–Why does everyone that comes here sounds like they come out of a book. There's nothing real here. Nothing natural.

–Is that why you like it so much?

She still had that wide-eyed stare that greeted her when she first entered the place. Now she saw herself as a regular. But regular to what?

–I just need a little pickup. Some help.

–Of course.

The women's washroom was getting crowded. It was not as if it was that big anyway. Someone brushed her as she squeezed into the door.

She braced herself as she looked in the mirror. Still that girlish grin. The pout of the mouth. She opened her purse.

–Anyone got a twenty?

She turned around, almost spun around.

**–What's going on in there?**

**–I really don't want to know.**

**–She told me that she studied math.**

**–There all good at exams. It's their source of confidence.**

**–Of course it is.**

**–Do you think that she's ready.**

**–Not yet. Maybe never. She may just spin out. Get just close enough and then spin out.**

**–Her face. She wants that puff.**

**–The smoke and mirrors.**

**–The fireworks.**

**–Too many distractions.**

I got a job in the salon

–I thought that you were going to go back to school

–I will. This just gives me a chance to catch my breath.

–What are you doing there?

–They've got me doing reception. You should come see me at work.

–Where is that again?

–They also said that they're going to have me doing shampoos. I mean this is easy. I've thought of going to beauty school.

–I thought that you wanted to be an engineer.

–It's all just a way to earn money.

–You got the strangest call last night.  
 –What was it?  
 –One of your crazy friends looking for you. What do they want now?  
 –How the hell should I know? I was here last night.  
 –The hell you were. You had to go out at 12:30. You didn't come back until 3.  
 –That's not really out. Out is being out all night long.  
 –That's pretty long as far as I'm concerned.  
 –And you're still concerned?  
 –I'm trying to be. I just look at you, and I don't see it anymore.  
 –Anymore?  
 –I don't think that I've ever really seen you in the daylight.  
 –We've been hanging out for three months.  
 –But it always seems like twilight when I'm with you. I don't want to live like this anymore. I feel like my whole life is being turned upside down.  
 –You don't feel it the way that I do.  
 –Feeling. You've been taking so much shit that you're seeing things.  
 –Real things.  
 –Real for whom?  
 –Real for everybody. You just haven't made it over yet.  
 –Over what. I'm over all this.  
 –Are you going to go back to Iowa.  
 –I'm not from Iowa.  
 –Where ever it is. Some where in the Midwest. It's all pretty much the same.  
 –That shows what you know.  
 –It all blends together. It's one world in the dark.  
 –Really?  
 –Yeah, and it's all starting to disappear on me. Like you too. It's like you're here. But it's like you're never really here. And that just means you're always here. So it's not you can really disappear.  
 –You are confusing me.  
 –It's really pretty basic.  
 –I'm trying to follow you.  
 –You just got to see it.  
 –I thought that you're not seeing much of anything.  
 –That too. I just want you to hold me.  
 –I can't. Not anymore.  
 –Don't get so heavy on me. I'm not used to being up at this time of day.  
 –You're going to have to do more of this. Clean up. Get some work. Turn around your life.  
 –I'd do it if you'd stay. Come over here, baby.  
 –I can't take this anymore. I'm becoming someone I don't know. You've become someone that I don't know. I thought that you wanted to escape this life.



–Your life is your life. You can't escape it. Only different shades.

–One of those shades is just moving too close to the end. I have to get out before that happens.

*Jay works to make the world fit his story. It is the complement to Crucial's story. He seeks to eventually disrupt everything that Crucial is after.*

–See that fucking freak over there. He's so ugly. I don't even know why he leaves his house.

–Someone just puked all over him.

*I could end it for you two little fucks right now. Quit laughing at me!*

It was going to be tough to get up in the morning

–I had seventeen beers. You should have stuck to scotch.

–Then I would have been totally hammered

–I got transferred in from Nebraska. I worked in an advertising firm. I just graduated from University of Iowa. A bit of creative writing and a lot of business. I thought the world was mine. Omaha seemed like a big city. But the firm didn't want me to stay there. They had plans. Especially after I introduced short field analysis to them. They thought that I was something brilliant.

>>I hit Atlanta running. I didn't think that there was any stopping me. But you know after a while you just keep wondering if this is all there is to your life.

–Sounds like a sob story.

–I'm not looking for sympathy. Just telling like it is.

–And how is it?

–It looks great from the outside. But inside, it's just rotten. In Omaha, everything was cool. But in Atlanta, everyone is gunning for my job. And they all pretend to be so charming. It makes me fucking ill.

He is sitting on a chair in the washroom giving me motherly advice.

–Can't you see that I'm trying to take a piss.

–I'm taking care of you

–You've got to run before you fly.

–Someone is reading it all over your shoulder.

–They threatened to report on him

–He said he'd kill him if he reported.

–Smell this! Do you know what this smells like.

She gave him a strange look.

–You know.

She did not. Or else she did not want to admit what she smelled.

–It’s you. It smells like you.

She gave him a sickened look.

–Don’t deny it. This is you shivering to get it in. Just begging to get cranked up.

She remained silent.

He caressed her face with the dildo.

–This is not degrading, this is exciting.

–I am not excited.

–Not to have this in you pumping up and down. Ending a boring evening with that morsel of excitement that will prepare you for sleep.

She twisted her lip as if to protest. He traced a line with it that stopped at her lips.

–Tell me how you want to take it.

–I want to take it inside.

She stuck out her tongue, and he dragged it along. She then wrapped her tongue around it. Licked it up and down. Absorbed its salty taste. She mimicked the contact with the flesh. her breathing became regular, and she purred:

–Anything to turn you on.

He did not want to give in to his excitement. He only wanted to maintain the challenge.

–You like the game!

She nodded in approval.

–Come on, baby, put it in me.

He found her invitation ridiculous, but he wanted to keep the interplay going. He massaged her luxuriant hair with the dildo. She shook her head to counteract the movement of the object. It was a magical brush, and she loved its touch.

With it, he reached under the flip of her hair and pushed it out.

–Keep on.

His gestures suggested so much to her. A smile crept over her face.

–Don’t stop. That feels so good.

He withdrew it from her.

–You know what I want to do. I want to push this in and out, in and out.

–Anything that you want, baby!

–Not what I want. What do you want.

–I want you to push it in and out of me. To get it so deep and just keep pumping with this.

–You know that we’ll never get tired. We’ll keep it going all night into the morning.

–I can’t control myself when I hear about.

She was displayed for him. She let the conversation excited her as she anxiously awaited him penetrating her with the form.

–I am so ready.

He moved it around the lips of her vulva. She was getting so wet. He started to vibrate her clitoris as she became more and more aroused.

–Do me in!

It was becoming so easy to slide the dildo around moist skin. She motioned as if to open herself up. But he maintained his path along the perimeter.

She loses herself in the genuineness of his smile. As they float together, she becomes overwhelmed by their connection. She feels these currents swirl around her. She surrenders to his flow. And she tries to maintain a semblance of balance as she somersaults into rush.

His caresses are consistent and lulling. She folds herself into him. The two of them fall under the amazing edifice of this passion. She grips the sheets intensely, as he is carried along by the momentum. She challenges his motions. He tries to hang on as she propels herself harder and harder into him. She seems to emerge from this

- Let's get out of here.
- Wait a second.
- If we drink any more we'll never make it to work tomorrow.
- Just hold on.
- What is it?
- Look.
- So.
- She's a wonder.

♫: mystical cause

α: a wonder

♫ → α

♫ makes α

A mystical cause makes a wonder.

- What's that supposed to mean?
- Just look.
- If I looked from now until the end of time I wouldn't see what you see. I've got to get home to get ready for work.
- Stay.
- I can't.
- I'll buy you another drink.

- How long did you know that you had this something special?
- Since I was a kid. It was those looks that I got.
- Still getting.
- What did you do about it?
- I paid it no attention.
- I don't believe you.

- It didn't seem that important.
- Are there many guys?
- Is that a question or an invitation?

**Billy** lived for one thing. He wanted to be a wonder. What he was born with. What he enhanced with his attitude. That lovely scowl. It made everyone want to be him, and no one could aspire after such heights. How long he took to get ready to go out at night. The bounce in his hair. The line of his jacket. The soft material hugging his frame.

- It's almost perfect. I wish that it could stay like this forever.
- It might.

### THE CUBE

Your desire aspires after the infinite. With a kiss, you dissolve back into the wonder of it all.

How long does it take you to get ready?

I want to make a good impression. Get my makeup just right. A touch of yellow eye shadow to pick up the yellow in my dress. The gold of the daytime carrying over to the evening. A flower in my hair. Flowers, I love the effect. You take all that time and you wonder if he's going to look back. He never does. But maybe tonight.

- Some of us have bigger concerns. We do.
- Like what.
- Telling the right story.

creates **É** .

What's **É** ?

The audience, the writer. The corporation.

What's **É**?

The *marvel*.

*EA*?

–We write stories to communicate with the dead. To bring the ghosts alive. In the spirit of a cat.

- I don't know any of the dead that I want to resurrect.
- The living seem like they're already dead.
- And so they do!

***Life moves towards this inevitability where you adopt the identity of someone more powerful than yourself; a messiah.***

I drowned in her perfume. As I slid myself inside her, I could feel her world close around me.

As I slid myself inside her	(great body)	
	her world closed around me.	
I drowned in her perfume.		Poison

The scent of cyanide.

–Do you have something to say?

–You’ve got a great body.

–You puke.

–Where did he go.

–Into the Apollo room.

–Where is it?

–Over there. Only guys in there now.

–What?

–You know about admiration.

He felt confident. He looked around at the other men in the room. He felt confident.

It’s when you fall in love with your own desire. All hard and erect.

–Is this all there is, she muttered.

What she had been hiding, she now knew all too well. She felt her world catching up to her, who she was, who she wanted to be. And so she gave into the torture of her perfection. It was just how it was supposed to be. All that she could do was run at a full clip to try to escape from herself. One mistake. That was all she was allowed, one mistake. And she felt that she was falling off the track and wouldn’t know how to get back on.

–What are you talking about? You just don’t know how to enjoy yourself. Let me get you a drink.

This was something that he wasn’t going to be able to figure out by waiting around. Did he really want to change that much about his lifestyle after he had done so much just to create himself.

–I think that we’re kind of the same.

She still thought about the marriage that she had walked away from. Every girl’s dream. And here it was again better than before. Except now that security was balancing itself on the head of a pin, ready to gamble it all in just one blow.

–Are you in or out?

He looked at her, he looked at all of them. Now was the time to get out. To make his way to the door, and when it closed, he would be done

- You know that you’ll never be accepted here.
- Either will you. I can see it in your face. You’re too precious.
- That won’t last. Not with nights like this.

Even though he stayed, he knew all this was temporary. He didn’t even have any of her juice. He was hanging on and hoped they didn’t notice. If she had meant more to him, he now failed to notice. She gave him the feeling that he was part of it all. And when he faced something more formidable, a wonder, he would not fade.

- Can I stay at your place tonight?
- You’re not going to go home.
- It would be redundant. Just let me crash with you.
- Whatever you need.

He knew what her expectations were. But he didn’t want to go back to his place. If he could string her along long enough, just keep all of this going.

- Come on back to the washroom with me.
- His reality was getting the better of his fantasies. His gamble was paying off.

- My tongue provoked her ecstasies.
- What can this mean? I’m already prepared for this.

- A bell was ringing. Wake me up.
- Whatever happens, be sure to destroy the evidence.

*Culture* is developing a taste for what is expensive. You can’t live without it. It melts in your mouth!

The porch was more like an awning that extended a little ways off the back door. A bench had been left back there from construction. The side street was seldom traveled. But the door was the link between the club and the street. Anything and anybody.

- Do you know what’s going on in there. There all members.
- Of what?
- Of the practice.
- Witchcraft?
- More than that. They don’t die. They’re immortals.
- That’s crazy.
- And if I asked one of them.
- They wouldn’t call it the practice. That’s my name for them, for all of them.
- They’re just a bunch of club goers who hang out together.
- No, it’s more than that.
- What more? Teenage sacrifice.
- I’m not saying anything like that. It’s just that they inhabit each other’s souls.
- What does that mean?

–It’s their secret.

I looked ahead of me in disbelief. I wanted something more from all this. I seemed to see a fire burning in the field up ahead. There was a parking lot up there on the hill. They used to hang out there if they couldn’t get into the Cube. The monsters. Monsters inside. Monsters outside.

## THE CUBE

I always thought that the Cube was this perfect place for a most wonderful experiment. A launching pad to the next dimension. We all gathered together for this cosmic search. The place was this nexus of concentrated psychic energies. On the other hand, what disturbed me the most through it all was how easily any of the participants could get scooped up by an impresario with the economic promise of a better life. That all this talk of the Paradise just made our day to day lives somehow bearable. Down deep we all felt the Cube was just this hell hole to which we had been condemned.

–What are you looking at?

The night trailed over into the next day. A flavor. To put a face with the feeling. I wanted it to be my night. And it would be. I watched her. He touched her. Brought her to ecstasy. All too familiar. A surrogate. He dealt with the mundane details. I lived off her certainties.

Flesh was liquid to his touch. He could feel himself absorbed by the flow. Kisses melted into kisses. In a stream he felt his tongue flow into her angles and out into another women’s mouth. Legs wrapped around legs in a confusion of identities. He licked his way into oblivion. A mound of flesh gave way to his caress. He sucked in its fleshiness. More hypnotic perfumes. He tried to brace himself. He felt full and confident, as if his desire encompassed the whole world. He slid himself inside the swirling mass. She gave freely. But that was not enough. He passed his hand through her so that he was touching another and his touch would not end until she opened herself to him.. She led him inside, starting to rock with the music. But her response was more intense. He felt himself getting pulled along these currents, overwhelmed. He was about to explode then and there. This world revolved faster and faster. His movement was more insistent. Bodies merged with bodies. Everywhere and he drove deeper and deeper toward the heart of it all. Weighed down by these forces, he was electric inside. An infinity of the touch. Boom!

He wanted to offer his phone number. Get names to go with these caresses. Looks surrounded his requests. We could do this again. You won’t forget. You’re part of us. You’ve surrendered to the night.

He enjoyed this new experience. Its defiance. Something that he could not boil down to his daytime regularities. The night wouldn’t let go. He sat at his desk. He couldn’t work. He got up and looked at himself in the mirror. Still the traces of eye make up. He moved his finger along the edge of the eye. He saw her watching him. Just peeking over her cubicle.

–Rough day?

–Crazier night.

–You want to come downstairs with me. I can help. I’ve got something to take care of the pain.

He’d never seen her before. Whatever he could do to keep it going. Just work his way through the rocky road. She pulled him into a bathroom stall. All scientific. He hardly looked at her, even though there was something that they shared.

–Here, all for you.

He felt the jolt. He wanted to rub his hands along her legs. Slowly lift her skirt.

She looked into his eyes and smiled. He was seized by the moment. Without a body. Powerful.

He didn’t want to give in to the day. Longed for another night with all the stimulation of the last. The aftertaste would not let go. Caresses mixed with time and impressed themselves upon his anxiousness. He wanted more. Now.

He reached over. Tried to touch her hand. What time was it? He needed to get out of here. Out of this building. Sure his confidence was fading. But it would only renew itself in darkness. Just to hold himself steady until that moment.

–You want something that we can’t give you. You can take what you need. But this place is all about giving. Not wasting what we have. You have to offer more of yourself.

–I can tell you my name.

–No names. We only invent new ones for ourselves.

Her name was Daisy. She wanted to be called Anastasia. So did everyone else here.

–I live as I died. A prisoner of my body.

He felt his heart flutter. This was all too much. Still gripped by that same force. It didn’t make sense. He couldn’t balance day and night.

–We aren’t like that here. We don’t worry about things.

Wasn’t she lying to him. She just aspired after the ultimate name change. A surrender to comfort.

–Do you really like it here?

He couldn’t ask her that. They were both getting what they needed.

He thought that if he gave more of himself that he could get the answers that he needed. He wanted someone to tell him her story. To let him know what made them all tick. But he was learning about the desperate quality of that very question.

–I’m hurting.

–Don’t think about it.

He saw her kissing someone else in the corner. She’d sneak upstairs, and he’d eat her out.

–I’m not having sex with boys now. It gets too complicated.

–I could give you something to help you out.

He wanted to sneak upstairs and watch. Touch himself as her skirt got pulled above her waste.

–Get it over with. I want to get back to the dance floor.



He let the two of them go about their business. It might as well have been two women up there. He knew what they were all about. Maximum pleasure all the time. That's why they needed him here. To buy them drinks. To offer to take them to dinner.

–If I have dinner with you then you're going to ask me to live with you. The next thing my stuffed animals are going to get strewn about your bedroom. Do you want that?

–If you go along with them, I wouldn't mind you all spread out on the rug.

–You get off on your little fantasies. Pleasure, true pleasure isn't like that. It's more of a negative thing. A form of denial.

–Coming from you!

You want to hold on to your day time. To your identity. You're an ID card and a number. That's what you want from us. Your allotment of sex.. Your dose. And then you just go back to your world.

–I could take you with me. Give you a place to stay.

–You keep this up, and you won't have a place to stay. You can't handle it. It's just beginning.

He could say anything to her. He didn't even want to get close enough to her. His desire was his gesture to her, a whisper in her ear.

–Why don't you say something to her?

–Seeing her is enough in itself. I don't want to embarrass her or myself.

He imagined her raising her hands in the air. Beckoning her fate. And that radiant dance. Everyone in the place must have their eyes trained on her.

## FLESH

I can barely move. Words form but nothing can be heard. I am witness to a spectacle but cannot tell anyone—what is happening?

Gesture, trying to explain. But my movements are too rudimentary to form words. Uncontrollable shaking. Noises. Squawking. I feel the sounds but I can't hear them.

There is a nightmarish effect. A quaking all around me.

This spectacle. I am displayed. Again these flashing lights.

We are looking at you?

I try to make a game of it. Go along. Wait for the visit. I know what's going to happen. I won't let it happen this way.

–If you say something, we're going to hurt you.

–More than you've already hurt me.

I am looking at myself on a screen.

Surrounded by another audience, all giggling.

–Why didn't they give her more?

–They will that comes later.

Now I feel like I am being operated on. I am spread out on a table.

–We need to replace this part.  
 –Replace it. Just take it out. Take that out and put this in.  
 What are they talking about. I want to resist but the anesthetic is too thick.  
 Or not enough,  
 –I wasn't supposed to remember this.  
 –You don't have control over your memory.  
 I twist and turn.  
 –You didn't tell me that this was going to happen!  
 –Just relax. Once you get past the initial stages, you will enjoy it.  
 But it continues.  
 –Just keep working.  
 Trying to turn the channel. I don't want to watch this anymore.  
 Words are being said for me. They are not my words.  
 –That looks pretty on you.  
 –It does.  
 Say it doesn't. Just stop this from happening.  
 I have to go along. I relax and feel these waves come over me. That sense of doing  
 something wrong.  
 –Don't worry. They tell you that it's bad. But they're just keeping it for themselves.  
 I want to be rewarded.  
 –Don't say anything and we'll give you some toys.  
 I have all the toys that I need.  
 Don't say anything. Is this the beginning. I get so chatty. But it's all silly. And when I  
 really want to say something, nothing comes out. Can you help me.  
 Put your hand in my mouth and pull out what it in there—those words that harden in the  
 mouth.  
 Here are your words. We are giving them back to you. They are all so useless. I  
 accommodate to the feeling. This makes me feel much better.  
 –It doesn't matter what you say. It never does. It's what you do.  
 –This is so much fun. Do it again.  
 –We're going to photograph you this time.  
 –Show us what you can do.  
 No, the flash hurts.

The flash is flesh.

I can barely move. Words form but nothing can be heard. I am witness to a spectacle but  
 cannot tell anyone—what is happening?  
 Gesture, trying to explain. But my movements are too rudimentary to form words.  
 Uncontrollable shaking. Noises. Squawking. I feel the sounds but I can't hear them.  
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 Surrounded by another audience, all giggling.  
 –Why didn't they give her more?  
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 Now I feel like I am being operated on. I am spread out on a table.  
 –We need to replace this part.  
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 Or not enough,  
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 –Just keep working.  
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 –Don't worry. They tell you that it's bad. But they're just keeping it for themselves.  
 I want to be rewarded.  
 –Don't say anything and we'll give you some toys.  
 I have all the toys that I need.  
 Don't say anything. Is this the beginning. I get so chatty. But it's all silly. And when I really want to say something, nothing comes out. Can you help me.  
 Put your hand in my mouth and pull out what it in there—those words that harden in the mouth.  
 Here are your words. We are giving them back to you. They are all so useless. I accommodate to the feeling. This makes me feel much better.  
 –It doesn't matter what you say. It never does. It's what you do.  
 –This is so much fun. Do it again.  
 –We're going to photograph you this time.  
 –Show us what you can do.  
 No, the flash hurts.

The flash is flesh.

## THE KISS

There is a solidity to what he sees. Her legs are firm. An aloofness in her stance. He surprises her. He put his hands each her buns. She does not look behind her. The touch is bold and certain. He slides off her gym shorts. She is ready to draw him in.

This is it. His hands butterfly around her. He stimulates her.

They measure each other's bodies. She tests his arousal. Her caress is aggressive. He welcomes her challenge.

His desire was rich and tart. And he savored the tang that gripped him. It was constant. And he floated on the high. He could feel the touch without touching. But more than that. It rendered him unconscious.

That impression entertained im. It sent the blood rushing. He floated inside it. The surrender. Enfoldng. Going so deep under. This is all there is to it.

Beyond the actual sensation. The lingering effect. He floats on that. He can call on it at will. It is his eternity.

She is there when she is not. Her body weaves its way into the textures of all his experience.

He kisses her. She takes a breath.

–Kiss me again.

Just the look and they have taken it on forever.

–I need you to say something to make it right.

–You're wonderful.

It didn't make any difference. Their embrace overwhelmed. In their approach, there was no room for doubt. They pulled closer.

She buried herself in his flesh. She submerged into breathlessness.

Everything was this. The growing attachment between them.

He let himself go. His desire to make it right. What he wanted to tell her. His sense of direction. All of it. He let and just released himself in the experience.

And the echo was now constant. Their bodies roar together.

He squeezed tighter. He focused his attention towards this feeling. Its mass. Part of what he felt he took from her, took away from her. This extreme was all encompassing. Even as it seemed to subside, his concentration kept it so intense.

Sheer will. He was coming up against this projection of himself. She encouraged it. Her hands worked their way up his legs. He thought about that. The gentle surprise of her kiss.

They could both feel a fatigue. Sweat growing cold on their bodies. And they pushed that tension. She wanted that. She needed that. The physical exertion. She smiled. The kiss was so extreme.

In this kiss, he could separate himself from her. Not from her body, but from her will. And in the process, he took over her body.

He found himself testing the balance between them. He could no longer divide his will

from her and the two of them moved closer and more insistent together. She became absorbed in his embrace. And he used her drowning, as a way of rising to the surface.

To think about her was now to think about her body. How she had adapted herself to his every whim. Even her ecstasies were only challenges to more intense feelings on her part. She loved this sense of contest that he offered her. If she let up in its pursuit, she would feel so much less of herself. He valued the limitless persistence in her. She would not recoil from his probing. He engaged her without reserve.

The physical contact affirmed a new certainty for her. Anything that did not enhance the physical was idle speculation. The lesson was so pointed. It stayed with her for days. Nothing but this. There was a frightening depth to the understanding. She had loved the wonder that had always distracted her. And now this distraction was her wonder in all its immediacy. She could not daydream. Now her longing was palpable. To strip him down to his naked desire.

There was almost a pain that accompanied their conjunction. The brutality of the touch. What she wanted so much. A need to increase the stimulation by any means possible. He chuckled at her new found aggression. For him this was the basis of their connection. How the body could reveal and how each understanding only pin-pricked a new opening. The needles made her jump.

The connection was this rubber band being stretched. He loved the pull. He anticipated the snapping back. Without that slap, they could not encounter the massive character of their feelings.

–Kiss me harder.

What did that mean?

The kiss could not be separated from the electric sensation on the lips. A light shocking. As the two of them came to life, there was no hesitation in how they each worked the other. He could feel her push him against a wall, spread out his arm. He felt weak and inspired at the same time.

He could only give in.

## SURRENDER

**lust n.** It's this physical feeling, like something's leaking into my brain. And I can't help how I feel. I just want him to rub himself all over me. I look at his body, all tight and ready to go. It just says one thing. And I can't help but give in.

Did you see his dick?

Was it hard?

Writing with it on me.

**sleazy adj.** You know that appeal. He's dripping with all the other women that he's been with and going to be with. And you just want him for yourself. To bend you over on his car in a parking lot.

I'm not supposed to do it. But I'm going to do it anyway.

**slut n.** He wants you but he can't have you. Never. And you've been with everyone he knows. He can hear you fucking in the other room. Ah!

It's not polite to talk like that in public.

-Where you going without giving me a kiss?

-You look good enough to eat.

-I thought that you'd call me.

-We were going to see each other today.

-You're with someone else, aren't you?

-Don't talk like that.

-You have to go?

-It's my ride. I'll call you. We'll get together.

-Tonight?

-I don't know.

-Tonight?

-I'll call you. Don't act desperate. It's not sexy to act desperate.

She looked around. Who else was watching her now?

He was preparing himself with her. If he could get her to turn on a dime, then he could get Sylvia to do anything that he wanted, anything. He felt so confident sucking here right now

HOLD BACK                      THE IMAGE

Were you thinking about someone else while you were having sex with me.

SURRENDER COMPLETELY

Oh honey I love you  
the kiss                      If I didn't have it, how could I get here...

transmitted  
reciprocal

I haven't seen you out in a while.  
I can't go out all the time. I like being quiet. Just staying in sometime.

You got to get up . I can't let you stay here any longer.

I need to find a place.  
I need a roommate.  
That's great

I've got to get a job.  
I could hook you up

We need someone at the store.  
Some inventory was missing. I'm not saying that you took anything.

I quit. It's not the kind of work that I like.

I don't know how you do it. You've been at the same job for five years.  
My expectations are modest.

you'll have to stop on by for a meal.  
I never would

She didn't have that glamour that I craved.

You've got to make something of yourself.

I know you care. But it's no longer enough.  
You work too.  
I hate it. I hate this life.

licked her nostrils to check for cocaine  
this gave him a strange rush as if there was not a cavity in her body that he could not penetrate.

moving way beyond

Vanessa  
lick at the insides of some essence a SOUL

needed some man to pay her for her time, special favors  
"what can you man give you that I can't I can take you away from your misery."

HEY YOU! YOU MISERABLE PIECE OF SHIT

looking at

grotesque

thin

vo

$$\epsilon^0 \quad \epsilon^{\theta-1}$$

$$\begin{array}{c} \Omega \\ \Pi \end{array} \begin{array}{c} \textcircled{m} \\ \epsilon \end{array}$$

A solves the equation implied by this matrix as  $\Pi \textcircled{m} = (\lambda - \Omega) (\lambda - \epsilon)$

$\textcircled{m}(\epsilon)$  expand

$$\Omega = \prod_{i=1}^m \epsilon_i > \textcircled{m}$$

$$\Omega = \prod_{i=1}^m \epsilon_i > \textcircled{m}$$

**THEA**

$\alpha \quad \alpha$

$$\alpha > \sum_{i=1}^{\textcircled{m}} Y_i \quad \dot{G}$$

$$\alpha > K\acute{E} > \sum_{i=1}^{\textcircled{m}} Y_i > (K\acute{E}) / \mu$$

**THE CLONES**

$$\mu(K\acute{E}) > \sum_{i=1}^{\textcircled{m}} Y_i$$

$$F(\epsilon) = \sum_{i=1}^{\textcircled{m}} Y_i \mu + \mu(K\acute{E}) > \sum_{i=1}^{\textcircled{m}} Y_i$$



$$\mathcal{E} > \sum_{i=1}^{\textcircled{m}} \varepsilon_i$$

I can't make heads or tails of this. I just want a simple explanation.  
something like love.  
Something!

## **PERVERSIETY**

Who's to say what it is?

YOU ARE!

To cross this thin line. What makes the machine. Throttle.

I'm losing myself.  
Is it a good loss.

Of course. negative silhouette

It was barely a look and he took her by the hand and led her up the stairs. He lifted her up on the upstairs bar. He aggressively slung her skirt aside as he burrowed his face deep inside her. His tongue led the way with confident forays and she melted under his intrusion. She pushed his head deeper into her as her legs moved all over the bar.

–It's not something that I can help at all. I really don't care about who does what to me. just so I can get off and return to the dance floor with that excitement.

–Are you on ecstasy?

–I'm high on life.

She took the pill because she wanted to ride the high. She wanted so badly to direct its turns. There was no way to steer, but it seemed to follow her direction. She could feel herself veer off the tracks and she just let it slide.

–This has nothing at all to do with someone else.

She smiled a big smile.

24

What is reader doing? Masturbating. Just bleeding off her concentration. Giving way to the words. An ocean of feeling.

23

Who are you?

He messed with his zipper.

–I’m not going to let you fuck me. I don’t even know you. I want you to eat me out.

She took his hand all drenched with his own cum and started to lick it. The saliva mixed with semen, that scaly glistening on his fingers.

Billy looked crazy, all disheveled–frantic

–I think my roommate has left already.

–I can give you a ride.

–I don’t think that I want to wake him up. He’s got the only key, and he has to work in the morning.

Billy used the term roommate rather loosely.

exploitation of my own

everything sucks (politics of fear)		
OR		
elitist		
extinction	CABLE	

1. great place	The dazzle almost knocked her off her feet	
2. what song  she loved the freedom there. she didn’t have to wait for some guy to come up to her and ask her to dance. People just threw their bodies into the music.	The music echoed in her all week. So loud. Reverberating to touch her SOUL. She felt every second enlivened. At work, she couldn’t think about anything else. It helped her get over her drudgery. Helped her to look through the faces of all these people here with whom she shared nothing in common.	I heard this song over the weekend. I don’t know how to describe it.  she heard her song. Almost jumping up and down, she ran to the dancefloor

3. you hide behind the music	I had to get in the room. Hide before anyone saw me. Hit the dancefloor. Not just one song. All the songs. Just immerse myself in that. If anyone wanted to make contact, they'd have to become part of that new me that I found out there.	
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### WE ARE POLITICAL

to include in our entertainment, in our work  
in our thoughts  
in everything that we do

that is our politics

can we make that accommodate with what you are offering

I was looking at her. It was unreal how intently that I could stare at her. She never noticed my gaze. Not a bit. Her eyes were blinded by the glare of the strobes as she tried to focus in his direction—the haze. I was drawn with muted intensity to her sad eyes and her half-open mouth, glistening in the flash lights. The kiss frozen in an unutterable paralysis.

I looked again at the golden reflection in his face. He was transfixed by his glory.

I was running out of time, the time to let her know. To catch up with my sense of realization. Not just the knowledge, but the passion, the striving of the heart.

She was already lost in another kiss.

It was just enough to remind her of a sense of rebellion when she roamed the streets of Milwaukee full of venom and spirit. That what his kiss was—sordid and electric—the feeling that she would never allow herself to escape That put down felt so severely in her teens in Wisconsin.

A gulf of time separated our two moments. Even if I had been part of that excitement, I had no business in her world.

She couldn't get away from it, that smell of the last night. A love of the gutter that permeated the body. She drenched herself in that fatal perfume. More potent than a thousand nights, firm, confident. Her lips took him inside.

She told me that she needed a ride. I waited while she finished getting ready. She claimed it was her favorite book. A moment of lucidity that the writer seemed to gain before

passing out completely. I put it down as quickly as I had taken it from the telephone table.

What Milwaukee had always been to her, a spiraling down and a sense of dizziness, always losing her footing, and the—that exquisite moment. That consumed her. And overpowering sensation. In those brutal winters, she could ignore her heartaches. Give it all up to a sense of hardship. Just hanging on trying to finish school. It had been a promise between herself and her Dad. Words. But he had gone away, done her a favor and vanished. And she felt that she no longer had to keep up her part of the bargain.

I looked around. It was a moment of triumph: “Everyone loves me.”

You were great!

I feel lost  
pretend you know me  
I feel sick  
I don't want to be here

I don't feel free  
you can't make me  
give me a ride dear

It's not like I'm going to leave my boyfriend  
I didn't know that you had a boyfriend.  
I do

Great. although no one around here is that possessive. You just end up sleeping with everyone else. And you stop caring about that high school stuff, who slept with whom.

It's not like that. I really love him.

Then what are you doing now.  
I want some drugs.  
That's a switch

She couldn't look at her former supplier as he had been the source of all her problems. Her disgust just cut into her. She no longer felt as if he had given her what she wanted. He had misled her. He had made it seem like it was so much more. He had fed her with that very anguish that she had come to crave. She no longer needed affection. This very absence made her come alive. She had become a philosopher about her habit. And now she detested how he had so much changed who she was. Just talking about it made her crave it. Even thinking about it brought a justification would now seem so hollow. But in that hollow she had found a completeness. Leaping over that empty space gave her a sense of accomplishment. The devotion made her feel like she had finally measured the depths of her personality, and she knew what she needed. Just that. And he could give it to her.

Now the ordeal made her feel nauseous. His presumption. He did nothing to dispel the belief. And he knew just when to show up.

–This is ugly.

–You know it is. That’s why you want it. It reminds you how to beautiful again. As if you can always be like that.

–You’re giving too much value to what you do.

–I only do what I do. I give you faith. You give me theology.

–I don’t need it explained any more than you do.

–But if you didn’t have the explanation, you wouldn’t need it. Your desire for answers is your addiction.

–I’m not addicted.

–I didn’t say that you were. It just your personality—it’s your addiction.

–What are you trying to say?

–That you think that you’re called in some way.

–What?

–You’re not.

–You’re my guardian angel, and you always come.

–Sometimes we want more.

–You get your revelation. I let you see what no one else can see.

–What?

–I let you see God.

–I thought that I had too much pride for that.

–I give you the chance anyway. When you want it so bad, sometimes it just happens.

–That’s my pain.

–I thought that you didn’t want to talk about it.

–You’re making it appealing.

–I remember when I first met you. How you looked down on all this. The whole shooting gallery thing was what frightened you most. But once your fear is that big, it’s a fascination. And it just takes a little push.

–And I hate you for that. I hate the fact that you still can hold up amidst all this suffering. I once saw that as a strength. Like you were some kind of explorer. Now I see that you just live off of everyone else’s blood. You just suck it all into you. It just free flows. Do you have any doubt who you’ve become?

–You’re the vampire, voodoo lady.

–It was never about that. I just needed to hold on.

–Hold on to what?

–Who I was.

She needed a break from these morbid recollections. Just to look at him from a distance. or not to look. She couldn’t look up. She just cringed. And for the time being, she again felt that this was all there was to her. And she wanted something from him just for that reason. Like he had never left her side. He never could. That’s why she reminded herself to never get close to him. But now the reminder hit home and it just burned from the inside. This was so ugly. EA

The drug was never in short supply

You never felt alone even when you didn't know anyone at all.

Some guy was rubbing my back.

What are you doing?

Do you want to come back to my place?

–What?

–My whole body feels like it's turned on. It's all about sex.

I never wanted it to stop. No Monday mornings. This needed to be my life constantly

The shrine offers the opportunity to cast off any ailment that pursues us. The approach to the church is a massive set of stairs. Penitents have been known to go up the stairs on their knees in the hopes that they can receive the requisite forgiveness.

Inside the Church there is a small recess with an altar. This is a chapel, a place of miracles. All the crutches surround the altar. This is where the healed have cast off their burden. Water bubbles up from an underground source. It is as if the church was built around a small cave, the mix of naturalistic and spiritual. The main structure is massive as if to counterpoint the chapel altar. Once they have achieved their reassurance, they can confront the majesty of their faith. They can again face the mountain.

I am a wrong turn. Slamming on the brakes at 150 mph. You can't avoid me. Look me in the face. I am the face under the sheet. Hello.

Too late for this guy. I just need to go the wrong way. You got to stop me. No one can stop me. This is my story and I'm ready to wander. My last stop. Breakfast before sunrise. I've been up all night long. Damn, I can't sleep. Get out of my way. I'm trying not to be obvious. You can still see right through me. This is my day. Day one and counting.

The man had it down. A fatality. Not just a bad day. Or a bad attitude. I've already swerved. I am the big bang. I am what is after

DELICIOUS DESERT SCENE

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pressure to maintain appearances

the leisure that I was used to

I feel like I'm decaying before your eyes  
I feel like I'll never be able to see things like

I feel like I'll never be able to feel like this again about anyone.

I him  
touch myself  
the narrative  
II him  
don't want to  
don't want to disturb the continuity  
there's sleep  
III her  
I feel dirty

Dy (*I'm getting too high, too quickly.*)  
test out  
you

IV  
her  
all

take this and you won't have to face the demon.

read about my double

married with two children  
special

LOT OF NOTHING

author curious

explore new author

feeling

become somebody

[I don't feel well.]

[You did this to me, didn't you.]

I'm on the plane. I go down to the other deck and the next thing the plane's somewhere else

I don't want to be your boyfriend

I want to be your god

–Hi. How have you been?

–I watched you make out with some guy at the bar at the bar last night..

–What are you telling me? That you're jealous.

–That you're easy.

–I'm going out with him

–Since when?

–He's my lover.

–Who are you kidding?

–You don't know. You can't feel what's in my heart.

–Maybe, maybe not. But can you?

touching my her cheek

a lesson in love

You were there that first night that I made my way among the crowd. I tried to hide in the shadows.

so did you

did our shadows somehow compete

Narcissus

examine self recognition from a totally comfortable

vantage point

the lookout

the horizon

I had pretty well forgotten all the doubts that had beset me during the garage crisis. I didn't want to dwell on any of those thoughts for the moment. For the moment, it was enough just to stare at Thea in the hope that my gaze might draw from her whatever made her exquisite. That I could become transfixed by this moment, drawn up in the wonder of it all. I smiled. If a kiss could give me just a dose of immortality, something to rescue me from this useless phase. I



tried to move to the songs but felt none of the facility that came to her.

I knew that if I shared my wonder with her, she would laugh. There was nothing to my supposition. But that didn't prevent my mind from wandering. To get taken in by the lustrous splendor that seemed to surround her. I knew that the lights added to her shine. As well as her trance-like affection for her present sensation. This marvel made my addition all the more an important.

He looked down at her staring into his eyes. He couldn't do anything.

He reached over to kiss her. In that instant all the confusion of the week before came to an end. He felt the weight of this immense fatigue, all focused. And at the same time, he felt relief.

She was everything that he wanted. Everything that he had ever wanted.. And now he held her close. He made every effort not to be question the feeling. To give in to the moment.

*–What do you think?*

*–Is that you?*

*–Sort of?*

*–It sounds so silly. Everything? What does that mean.*

*–It's just a feeling.*

*–It's the words, the situation doing the talking for you. It's such nonsense.*

*–You've never felt like that.*

*–People don't really act like that or talk like that. It's something that they read about in books.*

He had never been with anyone who had that freshness about life. None of the useless complication. The baggage that just drove you down. He floated with her. He held her close almost to make up for that helplessness in her eyes.

*What helplessness? She likes girls. She just uses guys to get her off. Takes them upstairs and has them eat her out on the bar. I don't even think that she wears panties. And then she just comes downstairs and dances some more.*

The dress just clung to her body. Like a piece of material that just wrapped its way around her.

Strap yourself in the passenger seat. We're going for a ride.

I wanted to believe because I wanted to be included in the music circle. To have her smile at me. To have us hesitate at the stairs wondering if we should do Bible study up in her room.

She seemed to appear at the end of a rainbow. I know that it was all part of their crass marketing. But it had an effect on me.

It's been so hard trying to find you. I don't want to lose you like this.

I'm sorry  
it's been so hard lying to you

Do you know who you look like?  
This is dangerous territory  
Is it

–You look great? what have you been doing with yourself?  
Some innocent comment about her exercise routine.

–I've been doing smack.

I smiled.

–No, really.

There was a look of horror in her face, a look that never went away. And now it was evidenced in mine.

–It helps me look good.

It was her only way to keep from going all the way over. She could maintain herself just at the edge. Her face had a new character. But it was a wisdom that frightens. A view from which there was no return!

she's been locked in here

I didn't know what was going on here.

–Really nothing.

she hasn't opened the door in days.

Are they locked in there together?

If I work harder, I get more money.

If I reveal more.

Someone's going to discover me.

He's going to want to talk to me tonight.

## SPACE OF THE IMPASSE

- I saw you last night.
- I’ve seen you before too. You were staring at me.
- Did you hook up with that guy from last night?
- What of it? We had some fun.
- He probably will never call you. He’s already with some girl. She was out of town for the weekend. And you were there.
- I never expected him to call.
- Down deep you hoped it would be different.
- And you are different?
- We could pretend that something’s going on. It could last maybe three months. I’d just go all crazy over you. We both could. The passion and all that.
- What’s stopping you?
- Nothing. Want to go out side?
- I’ve got a drink. And my friend’s here.
- Drink it up fast. It’ll push the rush. Don’t tell here friend. It’ll all make it seem more urgent. Like you’ve got to get back. Like you don’t want to do anything. Not to let go.
- You sound so sure of yourself.
- I’m not sure of anything. Except our passions. That desire to want to get out of here. Not just this place. To jettison the whole life to somewhere deep in space. You know what I’m talking about. That’s why you’re carrying that same magic with you every night that you’re out. You want someone to pick you out. You want that risk. You want to be reckless. So maybe you don’t have to come back to this bar. That you can pretend.
- What kind of car do you have?
- It’s an old Chevy.
- You got some dope.
- Sorry I don’t. That’s not going to stop you tonight.
- I don’t know.
- What do you want? An excuse. Let’s go look at the stars.
- I’ve got to go find my friend.
- Why don’t you just down that beer? That’ll be all that you need.
- You only want me because you couldn’t get with that girl who you were looking at earlier.
- Looking at? What are you talking about? I was looking at you. Your pearls. Your heels. You’re smile.
- You’re good at bull shit.
- I’m telling you like it is.
- Would you rather sleep with my friend?
- Where is your friend?
- Why don’t you buy me a drink? Then we’ll go outside.
- There’s a moment. You get locked in it. You have to give of yourself. Stay in here and the power of this place is going to bring us down.

- Is that all that you can offer?  
 –It’s not just me. You have really hypnotizing eyes. All smoky and mysterious.  
 –That’s supposed to work.  
 –I thought that it did.  
 –It works with the other girls?  
 –We’ll talk about it in the car.  
 –It works with the other girls?  
 –It works with the other girls. That’s why it works with you. It works. Beyond that we don’t know if we don’t do something. Stay in here and you’re going to rush home with your friend and wonder what could have been.  
 –I’m going to know because someone else is going to buy me a drink.  
 –But we’re talking about magic now. That’s just another promise.

Do you like it here? Why are you here? I’m here all the time.	
Did you see her	
Is she here?	
She’s always here.	
I’m not going to sleep with you.	
They ended up getting together. Things happened. I got over to his place. Do you want to come over to my place? I can give you a ride home.	
Something happened to me. I don’t know what came over me. I just went along. But now I think that it feels right.	
It got a little scary. I didn’t know what was going on. I just went along.	
He’s just a friend.	He pushed his way to the bar and found an opening next to her. –How are you doing? –Pretty good. I haven’t seen you in a while. –Some weird things have been happening to me.

<p>I really don't know what is happening. It's strange. I'm changing.          –How's that?          It's as if I can see myself. I'm doing these things, but I'm looking at myself from the outside.</p>	
<p>I felt this force just take me over. I couldn't help anything that I did. I just went along. But in the end it felt so satisfying. It wasn't meant to happen. But in a sense it had to happen that way.</p>	<p>Things changed. Something happened to me that had nothing to do with anything that had happened to me before. This physical force seemed to seize me. I can't pretend that it didn't happen. I can't go back to being how I was ever again.</p>
<p>When I hold you, I ask you to respond.</p>	

I'm waiting outside the Cube. I want to go in. I'm telling myself that it's OK. But I can't move. I don't want to go in. Not yet. What am I doing here? I don't want to do blow. Not tonight. Not anytime soon. But I am here. This is a shit hole. There's nothing here except the drugs. This is my version of fun. I've got to become part of it. This is who I am. My friends. They are waiting for me. Everything is inside.

## IMMORTALITY

I reflected back on my crisis and subsequent collapse. My incredible fear. The shuddering. I was already dying. I needed a remedy for my psyche.

–Your soul?

–I'm not sure that's what it is. It's a bi-product of the physical body. Only if it continues separately would I say soul. That is part of my disease. I am soulless.

EA

continuity  
 from my life to...  
 new immortality...every taste/every paper

reconceive/recompose

EVA.....she could know  
 crush

pick out

–Here’s how it works.

Tim was excited about his scheme.

You buy the item at sale price. I have to enter a price. Just to keep track of the inventory. They’d notice that. But when you return the stuff, you return it for full price.

–Won’t they notice that they’re paying out more for sale items.

--The guy who sets the cash register is such an idiot. He never figure out the discrepancy.

–Someone I know tried this in Indiana. They got caught.

–Do it anyway!

## SATURDAY NIGHT

### The Titans rules.

Dressed in their Edwardian vests and puffy shirts, they were everything. Their long flowing hair and absurd gestures made them the talk of the rest of the week. Everyone learned the style. Adopted the uniform.

For Billy—he was king—the pose came naturally. In contrast, the Count of Verona aspired to lead this meager group. The Cube was a small room. He could take the dance floor in a couple of turns—his infinity. He drew the limits on the rest of the crew.

Damon watched from his perch in the DJ booth. They were attentive to his shifts in rhythm. At the end of the night there was that last gasp. Everyone looked up to the booth.

–Damon, one more.

The booth was a fortress. Glassed in. You even had to reach around the glass and hang over the balcony to make a request.

–You are wonderful!

After a Saturday night, the comedown was incredible. I scraped what was left to me over the Cube on Sunday. I hope to recapture the same magic. RIP was in the corner dancing. The rest of the place was deserted except for one bartender and the doorman.

–They are beautiful boys.

## CM

I made my way as secrets do to the Cube. Light converging from mirror reflections where she (*Thea*) had been—the weekend before. slightly to the left of that spot ...CM and her two friends imitating the dances of a crowded Saturday. I didn't work, couldn't work the next day with the excitement of a Tuesday night, to measure all against the immediacy of the beat. CM., I'd heard the name, hadn't talked to her, but now impression would become conversation. --Yeah, I know her --if I did. --your friend --your friends. Already a reputation got a present for myself,

still dancing with out this conversation, strung along by the Cube. 4 AM closing, still to wanting, I'm Crucial Lingerin backwards, tripping on my time. --.Look it, I'm in the streets, a bit of bad luck, she dumped me... when my car broke down can't get around-have a place...can't get there-no, I get into fights on the bus. can't take it... ..this is Anne and June...maybe, another night...you know too much already... the last song... dance to it and you can have anything you want.

Perfect for a pop-monger, the last song was by some Brit hair cut boy. Perfect for these three girls, but I wasn't going to let my rep slip, especially so early into the game.

I still had her key ...although I knew she had forgotten me.. Perhaps she was somewhere else ...getting it... and we'd avoid embarrassment. Or she'd be so into it when she came in that she wouldn't notice. Her little coffin was up the hill...two blocks west from the Cube. She wasn't in-didn't come in that day. The next day I woke up at 4 in the afternoon. Hardly time to get a job hardly time to wake up ...For such a small pace there were too many mirrors..waking up to myself. I couldn't score a thing ...not even CM... I only had excused myself for spilling her drink. Said nothing else, didn't have the money to buy her another ....lalala. In some stupid way I still fell that she had something, knew something. But I had plans for what was left of the day and was glad that she wasn't around...

forgot what I had come down here for --If she said yes what would you do. --Who? --What... --Oh, CM There's things here ...like this is a place ....you don't want to fool with. --I've been places that you don't even know exist. --Then you'll learn. The rules aren't at all the same here. --Tell me about CM .... --There isn't much to tell... --tell? --Some things you have to find out on your own. --You going to come out with me ...show me the secrets ...a tour guide. --There's a girl... Ariane...wispy blonde..look for her. She clued me in ...Well now ...I find it sort of boring... I have to get things done before I leave ...that life only gets in the way... --What 's the secret... --You're not right to know... --They're all dying. --That's ridiculous. ---I told you that you weren't ready. --They all wear white...they're not even into death. They're mostly blondes. --That's just the way theat they look.. They're losing their color and strength. He wasn't in on it. Rather envious, he made up this stupid and superficial lie.

I made it back to the Cube that night. Caught CM leaving, said hello, introduced myself, offered to buy a replacement drink, she was in a hurry, got her phone number, said good- by. I caught a beat and rode it for the rest of the night. The next night was a Thursday, always hopping. I hadn't called CM and she didn't show up. I got lost in the tapestry of faces, of so many blonde heads sparkling against the green lights. Couldn't dance much, mostly falling apart in front of the mirrors. Made my way upstairs to a secreted window spot. I watched patrons slither into Mannequins across the street. I wasn't into a drag show bar and couldn't put myself together to hang downstairs ...

Thursday: August 1

–What do you know; that's just your opinion.

–Yeah, but I'm right.

Post nervously dug his fingers into the luxurious couch, the only one in the club--no doubt recovered as an office cast-off. It was accompanied by a glass table. I scratched my hand on the edge of the table.

Post stared at the scratch.

–Post, I know I’m right.

The music was important; it wasn't just a game.

--I was just distracted. ..Crucial, just because you found it important doesn't make it important. I got to get another drink

CM and Anne came back with drinks. They sat down on the end of the couch and left a space between us for Post's return

–How are you doing, Crucial.

–Pretty good.

I had so much to say to Post, but now was speechless with CM.

–What were you saying to Post?.

–We were talking about music. ..industrial music.

–What can you really say about music. When I hear a new tune, I got to find what it is. You know what that frustration is. You got to go ask the DJ. I'll just rush to find out what it is, so I can get it the next day.

–Sometimes it's good not to get what you want.

–Come on Crucial, you're just trying to be clever.

–Here comes Post.

–CM, I've got it. Let's go.

I felt this sinking feeling. Clearly I had been with them talking. But just as clearly, I was not invited to accompany them on their expedition. Of course if I wanted it, I would have forced my way in; but sometimes it was good not to get what you wanted.

Already, I was out of this game -hanging on a conversation that had exploded before me and fixating before an idea that prevented me from dancing.

This was par for the course on Thursday. Knowing that this was a big build-up, but not having enough time to make up for early losses. Music doesn't always accommodate our need for self pity. In a few minutes I was hopping to Terry's "Red Desert".

–I love that tune.

–You going to get it tomorrow, CM.

–Get it. ..I've already got it.

–So, is it fun?

–It is; that's all. Do you like this tune?

–The guitar's undermixed, the bass has no tone, and the beat is boring.

–I guess you're an expert on that; but I still like it.

–Well I can't dance to it .

I went back to the table. I watched CM's relentless energy bringing the night to an early end. I could only deal with the climactic flow and couldn't work through the slow-paced night. I watched how CM enjoyed the beat. I could never feel it like that. I'd come apart if I did. I looked at her absurd white boots as they chased the beat.

–Crucial why are you sitting there. Is something wrong?



–No, June, I was just looking at things.  
 –We've got some fun. Want to do some?  
 –No thanks  
 She walked over to the woman's washroom. Post followed her in.

CM was the first character whose rise was charted. We were not close enough to Thea yet.

CM needed a more colorful name to ingratiate herself to the Edwardians,  
 –To the nobility.  
 –To the Imperial Set.  
 –The Incredibles.  
 –The Titans.  
 –I like that.  
 –She called herself Christina von Mayhem.  
 –Great name.  
 –Too much like a drag queen.  
 –She loved the *von*.  
 –Everyone did.  
 –Needs a patch or a monocle.

–Don't move too fast. I want time to tell my story.

If she didn't move too fast, she could retain her integrity. She already wanted to linger rather a long time in the bathroom.

–Don't piss on yourself.  
 –At least I'm a *real* girl.  
 –Yeah, but who's the *real* bitch?

–No one's every going to take us seriously.  
 –Anne, you can't say that.  
 June was holding out for some guy to make her feel special.  
 –I have my painting.

Anne was also a student. But she was unsure of what was her major.  
 Christian was making the night life into a new career.  
 –It's better than working in the hospitality industry for the rest of my live.  
 –I thought that you wanted to be a hotel manager.  
 –I just want to wake up in hotels.  
 –With a different stud every night.  
 –I'm a good Southern woman. I've never gone home with one of the boys that I meet

here.

–You just let them feel you up in the washroom.  
 –Only if they give me drugs.  
 They all laughed at their harmless dalliances. They could only admire things from afar

and pretend to be the rulers on the week nights.

I let Christina lead me on her excursions into the night.

–You may never have another chance.

*The story permits CM to attain a glory which was deprived to her in the actual interplay. June had other ideas for a script. And she indulged those whims. We have hardly any examples of her insights. She probably shared her gems with Immanuel.*

**I CAN'T KEEP TRACK OF ALL THESE CHARACTERS.**

**–Just think Thea, Thea, Thea, Thea. Everyone else is unimportant.**

### **THEA'S RIVALRY WITH BILLY**

Thea could hardly admit a rivalry. She did not permit, she just was. Billy was more concerned what a queen might do to upset his majesty. He adjusted his hair as he made it to the center of the dance floor.

–I am here. I am King Billy.

He was. King William need to assert his reign. Sure the Count of Verona had tried to attract the attention of everyone. But his hair did not flow like Billy's. Chris and Joey also saw their turn. Anthea trailed right behind them. There was even more opulence in Chris and his beard. But Billy did not let that bother him. He was still the fairest in the land.

What about sex?

–What about it?

The king did not want nasty rumor spread about him. He wanted perfection pure and simple. In and gone.

–Didn't you love me?

In such a swirl Anthea wished that she could be one of the boys. She chronicled the wicked ways.

–Drugs can make me a better player. I will dash my sword against the walls of tyranny.

Only the wicked daytime sun was match for her resilience.

–Do you mind if I plagiarize?

–Just spell it right?

–Straight or right?

–In or out.

–Hard or soft.

–All of the above.

–I wish that we could make you one of us.

–Merrily we will.

–I'm not looking for a sex change or to strap on a dildo. I want someone to appreciate me for my wit. The only thing straight guys appreciate is a sharp point not a sharpened wit.

So she traipsed around with her inevitable goal. To be a wonderful incredible and even better Thea than Thea could be, an Anti-THEA–Anthea.

–I’m not an anti-thesis. We could be friends.  
 Drugs and sex upstairs would join them together. That would be a perfect world and in that world Thea would serve as no threat to Billy.  
 –Clap your hands and have fun. I am the king.  
 Those were the days to have fun. You didn’t even need drugs. Not yet.  
 –You just need to be as beautiful as I am.  
 –I just bought a Love and Rockets album.  
 –Or Siouxsie and the Banshees.  
 –I love your eyeliner.  
 –I am the King.  
 Did his eyeliner look good?. He didn’t want it to look like eyeliner. It needed to look like his eyes were incredible.

–I am better than Thea.  
 –Of course, you are. She doesn’t give head as well.  
 –I don’t give head.  
 –And neither does she.  
 –It is better to receive than to give.  
 –Give it up.

#### **THURSDAY: THAT’S JUST YOUR OPINION: NO, I’M RIGHT**

How long can you last?  
 –Forever.  
 –That’s a real long time.  
 –What are we doing here on a Thursday night.  
 –It’s a game. See how long we can go without saying what day it is.  
 –Billy, I thought that you had to work tomorrow.  
 –I’m too beautiful to work. Don’t you think so?  
 –Why are you out all the time?  
 –I need my beauty rest.  
 –I hear blow jobs are better than beauty rest.  
 –I wouldn’t know. I’m the King.  
 –What are you doing in the women’s washroom?  
 They all laugh.  
 –I heard that!  
 Billy wonders if his mother would approve, He has tried so hard to elevate himself from his origins.  
 –My son will rise to his throne.  
 –It’s better than the chicken coop.  
 –You weren’t really born in a chicken coop.  
 –Chicken little.  
 –I really feel like a bitch today.

- You are the King. However, you want to feel.
- I am really afraid that all this will soon fade.
- Just don't cut your hair.
- I want to hold on to you hair when I'm fucking you,.
- We all do.
- I don't come that cheap.

I went in to buy groceries.

-I know you. You go to the club. I've seen you dance. You don't talk to anyone. What is your name?

- Crucial.
- Do you like it there?
- Tell me all about the Cube
- This one woman brings her son in there.
- And..
- We're friends. I have this other friend Blaise.

Blaise was in a car with Connie.

The cab driver cut off the car in front of him.

-That's pretty shitty driving if I don't say so myself.

The Cabriolet drove on. The cab driver bumped the car in front of him.

-What a dick head. I'm going to get out.

-Let's just drive out of here.

-No, I'm going to say something.

-He's crazy. Just drive on.

Connie recognized the danger. Blaise seemed entirely oblivious. He wanted to repair the damage.

There was this incredible distance that he opened up in the straightaway.

Jenna turned to him with a sense of relief.

We've escaped him.

As they turned the corner, a car pulled up alongside them. The driver leaned out of the window and with one shot took out

### **FRIDAY: WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY, WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY**

Speak-I couldn't say a word. I was imprisoned in my self. I didn't have great hair a nice Edwardian jacket. I was the punk reaction. What I had to say. I said it at a show at the Metropolis. We all headed on to Marta and went down to venue. Loads of kids with a cause. Some just too trashed to know the difference.

They squatted. They refused to pay rent. R-E-F-U-S-E The trash heap of the society. The battle of the no wave. Overcome through non-participation. They would not give money to

the military. They were not part of an occupation, they were part of a liberation.

–Anarchy.

–A lot of kids down here are from abusive homes.

–My Dad’s ex-military, and he treats me like a prisoner of war.

–You just have to look at what goes on in Latin America. CIA bullshit.

–And it comes home to roost.

–Have you seen Suburbia.

–We’re tired of this shit. If we have to take things. That’s what we’ll do.

The room was dank and full of sweat. The pit whirred around until it bore a hole in the floor.

–We are all performers. No stars.

Some guy jumped on stage to sing with the band. That’s how it had to be.

After the show I saw some guy who was going to the Cube. Hardly anyone there tonight. Two girls. One very ballet-like with short blonde hair. She danced barefoot in the middle of the floor. Thea better watch out.

Lars approached the dancer. She played along his charming appeals. I just watched. There are things that I needed to say. This was not my scene. I was just along for the viewing.

When does the witness speak. In so doing, does he lose his vantage point.

I am sure that I have seen her before. Lost among the Titans on a Saturday night. She twirls with total confidence. Perhaps in a world too remote from the club’s realities. Does she live for the Cube and its concerns

## **SATURDAY: THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT YOU’VE SEEN IN YOUR LIFE**

Thea hope it would be her. She had no excuses. Nothing could prevent her ascendancy. The summer air still hung in all its heaviness. The air conditioning of the Cube had been running since opening that night. It was refreshing as she bathed herself in a soft sweat. He skin gleamed. The natural glow set off the luster of her hair. She was once again invigorated. She raised her hands about her head.

–Can I fly?

–If she actually flies, this will make our night.

–If she actually flies, then we’re really fucked up.

–She’ll do whatever we want her to do.

–Aren’t we changing the order of things

Billy was consternated.

–It’s not as if she’s a queen.

–Whoever made you king.

–Whoever let women in this place?

–Women have been coming here since it opened.

- When was that?
- Three years ago.
- Hell if I know. I felt like I’ve always been coming here.
- I eavesdropped on the conversation.
- Who’s that creepy thing over there?
- Not one of us.
- A guy with ideas.
- Just ideas.
- They all laughed.

–This is not a fucking circle jerk. Get about your business. You’re all getting me sick, you little hens.

Billy was upset. And his court did not please him at all.

I stood my ground and stared at Thea. The dance floor was already crowded. The Titans clung to their perch.

- What do we call ourselves anyway?

The Count of Verona was incensed as well. He felt that he was sponsoring Thea only to the opposition of the monarch.

- If that’s the way he feels, maybe we’ll have to depose him.
- He has the looks.
- Everyone wants to sleep with him.
- Girls too.
- Thea doesn’t have that command.
- Thea is a fucking goddess.
- We all know that!
- The Count repeated himself.
- Thea is a fucking goddess.

There were rumors about replacing Thea. But if the Royals’ opponents feared disapprobation, Thea’s enemies were subject to more fatal ailments.

- Am I supernatural?
- Do a trick?
- Like what?
- Something that everyone will remember.
- She could only conjure up a future that made no sense.
- As I made my focus, another dancer passed in the way.
- Who was that?
- No one important.
- You can’t really say that. At least not now.

### **SUNDAY: HE ARRANGES THE MIRRORS TO SEE HIS IMAGE**

- Who is he

–Billy.

Not only were the mirrors arranged so Billy could watch himself from anywhere in the club, they were also set up so that anyone else who watched himself would also see Billy in the background.

RIP got a little pissed.

–Girl, this is my show.

–What are you going to do tonight. Crucify yourself?

–That would have been last night. And it didn't happen. Im saving myself for a lover.

–And then death on his cross.

–In his arms.

–Just one lover.

–I can always come back.

–REST IN PEACE

–R.I.P.

–Kick it RIP, you fucking skeleton.

RIP ascended his stage and started to grind to disco.

–I thought that they were playing new music here.

–RIP plays what he wants to hear.

–I thought that he liked the Cramps.

–Anything scary.

–But disco.

–95 per cent disco, five per cent rock.

–But he is dying before our eyes.

–He likes to make us think that.

–That is why he is so affectionate.

–Why he is the star.

–Don't let Billy or Thea hear that.

–It's Sunday night. They're both trashed from the night before.

–I heard that, bitches.

Billy slithered in. He was not made for Sunday's.

In fact, the Cube was not actually a cube. It was a long rectangle. And the short end seemed even shorter tonight. Billy felt like he was bracing himself on both walls.

I would make Sunday my own. I tested out dance moves with the empty floor. There were people in the club. They drifted around the floor. They all wanted to avoid the mirror.

I went home with a powerful reminder of Thea. She had not been in the club. Very few women that night. One, Sylvie, captured from a corner. In a long skirt, she just watched the dance floor.

–Can you get any closer.

–She moves away as we move closer.

**MONDAY: SYLVIE–CONFRONTATION**

*I could feel myself merge with Sylvie in my dreams*

–Will you try to kiss her?

–If she talks to me for any length of time.

I thought that Christina might return this week. She had been out briefly on Saturday. I thought that I saw Anne and June. But this Monday was dead until about 1:30. Usually that was the cut off hour. Not tonight. Some outsiders wandered in. One guy started to harass Sylvie. She looked like she needed rescue, until I saw her making out with the one guy. He had the look of a street hustler. I thought that I saw her reach under his pants.

–If you want to make it, you’ve got to make it now.

My miserable fantasy was immediately getting the better of me.

I went outside for a moment to watch Sylvie move her body against the heavy. She came back inside by herself. I wonder what she had offered and what she had received.

There was something very desperate about the look in her eye. She stared at me and then walked over to the bar.

Enough time passed that I thought it was my moment. Sylvia had been playing with me all night long. Then she just glared at me.

–What’s that about?

Her voice seemed other worldly.

–You want to show me your muscles.

My Sylvie was this world-weary poet. This Sylvie was a dick-sucking flesh eater.

–What?

–Do you want me to suck your cock?

I looked around.

–There’s no one else here.

Sylvie’s directness seemed risky here. She gave me that look to put me in the know. This wave of fear came over me I wasn’t ready for any of this. Sylvie smiled.

I didn’t last long in there. I beat off when I went home. I was driven by her come on. Close to climax, I realized the secret. Sylvie was a man.

**TUESDAY: HELLO BY ITSELF**

The night twisted its lesson around me in the form of a social impasse. She brushed by me. I spent the night glancing her way. I dedicated my dance to her. She walked through me. She wanted me to say something but I was unable to. I couldn’t even say hello. If I just made an impression that was strong enough to make her want to return.

From a different vantage point, I could easily walk away. I could evaluate its effects without letting it influence how I actually behave. There was time when I worried about my financial security. Where I wondered about the drudgery of the next day of work. Where I used the excitement of the night to hold out for something more. I would not surrender until the last possible moment. Once I was implicated in the scene, I could not change channels in mid-



program. I would wait out the drama until it played itself out even if it might jeopardize my day time activities. Some of my friends would even stay out until 3 or 4 while dreading a 7AM wake up call.

This is where the night became particularly ominous. Once I was sucked into its maelstrom, my daytime hours appeared inevitably compromised. I could feel this wave sweep its way over me and drown me in its wake.

I could look at my watch and feel an urgency. I felt the balance between a needed appointment and the magic appeal that surrounded me. For the moment, she was more than Thea for the moment. I could smell her perfume. I looked at her. Our glances sailed off each other. The pressure to resolve the impasse. I could ignore her appeal as so much less than Thea. That would give me the strength to accept my weakness. Or this could be the basis of a deeper weakness. I saw her as some type, even less than Thea. Ignoring her ability to dominate the night, I let her slip away. I cannot possibly taste defeat in this form. I have reserved my passions for one more reverent—ha!

In another scenario I saw her talking to some guy. Someone who she had taken home. They compared notes and realized that their lives were going downhill. This was the time to take charge. With their small sacrifices, they did. And each day was a slow progress on that road. Their developing business, her degree, the purchase of a house—they were getting closer. And if today seemed mundane, it was the only hope against being reclaimed by a ravaging scene.

—I have to go. He's waiting for me.

And that call of the wild that stops her in her tracks. That lets her get rid of all those frustration. She couldn't look me in the eye. She had to get out. There had been those moments. The innuendoes. The grinding bodies.

But she escaped with her soul.

I got to the club a little late that Tuesday. She recognized me as she filed out.

—Hi!

A big smile came over her face.

### **WEDNESDAY: GO THERE WITH ONE IDEA IN MIND**

I planned to speak up when I went to the Cube today. A mere hello would not be enough. I thought about what shirt I would wear. Wrote the conversation out in my head. What would be my opening?

—How did we get stuck in here tonight.

—The land of forgotten toys.

We both smiled at each other. Hadn't we had this conversation before. All the details that we saved up in the hope of just such a moment.

—I knew that you felt the same way that I do.

It would be too perfect. What could hold me back?

–You aren't going to tell Thea.

And I let myself break down. I'd be dry humping her on a wall.

–You really didn't do that, did you?

Who would hear my story? Who would repeat it?

It wouldn't be Thea. Thea would hear about none of this. I wasn't ready to tell her this. And would she ever be ready. All my mythology would only take her aback. It would seem like the greatest come on ever.

–Just tell me what you want so I have the chance to reject you.

Wednesday night had brought out a crowd. They would leave early, but they were here.

It was getting harder to look for work. My excursions into the night made me feel invincible. No routine job could satisfy my yearnings. At the same time, I was failing night after night in effecting my plan. This added to my paralysis. I needed to figure out the secret.

My art became bolder. My commitment to the night became all-consuming. I lived in this eternity. Each gesture was greater than anything attempted in the daylight hours. I needed to stay with the dream.

If Thea gave in too easily, this would wreck my whole theory. At least, Billy sought some greater tribute. Maybe he deserved the crown. But could I just admire. I wanted to participate. Thea seemed to engage my senses to a greater degree.

For some of the amateurs of Wednesday, the kill had to be early and immediate. I hated this ferocity. It was such a contradiction to the slower nights. On those nights, we waited out the action. With a crowd, no one knew when their first move might be their last.

–I feel beat.

–You need a stiff drink.

–Just wait your turn.

–That could be three months.

–No one loves in the modern world.

–The money girls do.

They all laughed.

–Who's buying today?

–Some queen from Jersey. He came here to show us the ropes. I think he's a fucking breeder.

–Just fuck him up the ass. That will get him ready for his vocation.

#### **THURSDAY: MORE BAND NEWS**

They had opened for Toxic Reasons and then headed over to the Cube.

–This place is too rich for our blood.

–Thursdays and Sundays are the good nights to go out.

–Why?

–The tourists are still at home waiting for the security of the weekend.

–I know about weekends.

–Here, it's all different.

Scott thought that he had snared a Philly. I wonder where he had learned his ways. No one was to be snared here.

–A few kisses don't mean anything. I've got a girl to go home with. She's going to satisfy me.

A few straggling tourists knew that their search had doom written all over it. This dancer had none of their doubts. She could play around. But she knew how to play the black widow better than any visitors. This was her lair.

I was afraid that she would leave with Scott. She was becoming my Thea for the night. She made the lights work in her favor. Where Thea was entirely natural, there was something almost calculated in her flair. She knew more than anyone that this was her room. At the same time, it had been promised to Thea. How could anyone else threaten this dominance? What could she do that would stand in Thea's way?

–Do you want to kiss me?

What was I hearing. I couldn't hear anything with the music blaring. Scott fell over her. She found that charming. Hadn't I seen the same attitude in her a few nights back. Was my dancer just playing along. What was the game. Her body twisted around with the music. She stretched, she huddled, she turned. Her barefoot steps were precise.

She looked at me as I also showed myself on the dance floor. Even as she sat down, her eyes were trained on my movements. Scott was touching her. That was just automatic.

–What can I do for you?

–Nothing that I'm going to remember for days. I like girls too.

–What kind of place is this?

–People do whatever they please. Are you fucked up?

–Don't you hang on to anything?

–You've just met me and you're trying to fuck me. Then you come on with this moral trip. Where do you come off.

–Does this mean that you don't want to be with me.

–You're here tonight. You'll do. I'll just wash you off in the morning.

–Are you good at this sort of thing?

–You're not really part of my world. You can't be.

–I know the bands. I know the songs. The members of Death City are my friends. I play guitar.

–Cool. Do you play yourself too?

–That makes no sense.

–I don't need you. Go home.

–You let me feel you up in the washroom.

–I don't remember that. You're starting to bore me. Run along.

–You said...

–Get the fuck out of here, townie.

Her response was certain. She had her friend with her. They both left. The dancer gave me one glance back as she headed for the door.

*She was a bit disheveled. Holes in her tights. Flats. European chic. She had her hair tied with a scarf behind her head. I saw her crossing a bridge. I moved in the same direction of her. Soon I noticed that we were taking the same turns.*

–Are you following me?

–You know me.

–I’ve seen you around. We’ve never spoken, but I know you.

–I want to go back to your place with you.

–I’m not going there.

–I want to go with you.

–I’m going to a friend’s.

–I want you to invite me in.

–He’s a guy.

–You’re going to invite me in anyway.

*She accepted me trailing her. We walked along an endless street until we got to a red brick apartment.*

–Now that you’ve walked with me, you can go home.

*I wouldn’t go. She let me come up.*

–Don’t say a thing.

*I couldn’t tell if there was someone else in the apartment. She brought me to a bedroom. It seemed to be a guy’s bedroom. She took off her coat and put it on the bed. I grasped her hand and held it a long while.*

–Are you afraid of the same things that I am.

–I’m afraid of strangers who come into my bedroom.

*–Why? It’s an irrational fear. The windows are locked. It’s the third floor. No way in here.*

–They come in the door with me.

*I eased her against the wall.*

–I’m dying.

–What do you mean? All women say that to me.

–Are you supposed to finish me off?

*I breathed on her neck. Licked her ear lobe. She breathed heavily and then turned her head.*

–I should have never let you in. I’m not going to sleep with you.

–Sleep. It’s four thirty in the afternoon.

–No kissing.

*I ran my fingers along her lips. She playfully nibbled them. Then her teeth made a play.*

–You like that?

*I moved my hand along her legs. She surrendered as she pushed back at me.*

*She was already moaning before I touched her.*  
*–You’ll have to leave after you finish.*  
*I was still dressed. I had removed her underwear. She was on the bed on top of me.*  
*–Is this your endgame?*  
*–I wanted to hold out for more. My hand was inside her.*  
*–I said no kissing.*  
*She let me again kiss her ears. Then she gave in to a deep open-mouthed kiss.*  
*–You should have never done this to me like this?*  
*–What?*  
*She kissed me. We both were intoxicated by the moment.*

## COURTNEY

When Courtney first wandered into the scene, they found her charming. He youth did not threaten, it rejuvenate. Even Thea was charmed. Later, she would make her threat known.

create the feeling  
 then they can feel it too

I just want to be alone with my sadness

the death shudder

–Can you get me a drink. I’m only seventeen.  
 –Sondra, you’re someone special. At least, you think that you’re someone special.

if I stay any longer it means that I want something.

All I could think about was Thea–**THEA!** I was becoming consumed by her. I could feel myself merge with here until we were indistinct.

–Why do you feel such pain, such suffering?  
 I could not be ask to be held. To be held was to be held away.  
 Frozen, without hope. to find a mirror and become immersed in its passion.

Eva, Eva

Thea observed the planet Venus. The goddess instructed her.  
 –You want to be desired. But you do not want to desire anyone.

I stood among them in silence as if I was just coming to life.

I just want to sit here forever!

Language won't let me say IT!

Enigma Von Variant

–I was in Paris when it all happened.

my life as your beauty

He got lost in something rather trivial: I'm sorry that I'm not that affected by what happened between us. I'm looking for an emotion that might affect me in a deeper way. He killed himself.

–How can I trust you?

–But it will be a great two weeks.

–I love you too much.

–Crucial, you're living with an idea that you know it not true.

–This is great stuff.

I was even being seduced into the pleasure.

Crucial long lost brother: the claim to Cruciality.

We both need proof. We have assumed rights that are not ours

*W.D. needs to break in here. Ridiculous as this discussion has become pleasure easily available and disposed.*

*Primary, the contradiction. If together then it is separate. Obviously reprehensible, excited and immediate.*

*Then held away, falling to disuse*

*Like any desired relation, make the relation primary. and if not desired, make the falling away primary.*

*Crucial felt so much better. Dovsky returned to his crimes. Lalue still correct and relentless as this was all imagined.*

*The opponents Dovsky and Kalu.*

## **FLASHBACK TO PARIS**

like Paris

an escape route in the school  
punk stripper sucks the orange  
a balance

Dovsky's politics of sexuality

If you do this for me, I'll be nice to you

The geography of euphoria. We will teach it to you.

Dovsky's work on childhood sexuality

To understand how Cruciality was grounded in the party search. Ability to challenge the Era.  
Certainty acquired from the parties, the knowing. that would be a source of strength

A sense of Cruciality emerged from the search.

–Your reputation meant too much in your analysis.

–Are you ready to get punished

–I didn't do anything wrong

Let's have a talk about your Communist paradise. Sex all the time with those cute fifteen  
year olds.

–Touch the phone and you blow up.

–Alex has been leading you along.

Phoenix, Tristana

desire as a lack

Sylvie talking about being unable to write.

I did understand. I understood all too well. If I had pulled her close and kissed her at that  
moment the logic would have been so inevitable. Her resistance would have melted. But I posed  
her desire as an intellectual problem. She could escape that logic. Get out of the dilemma  
coldly.

–I hate it here. I want to go home.

### ***THE SHUDDER***

the shock lifted him from the sidewalk and moved him onto the grass. It had moved from inside  
his head to knock him down.

If he's not the man in the blue Cadillac with the diamonds, then don't talk to him.  
He'll rip you off.

can you make change  
 they cut him here and here  
 hey gorgeous  
 discovery

We're all sick of who we love. You just wait. Wait for something even more promising.

You're beyond entirely too cute.  
 What's that?  
 Drop dead cute  
 Do you like being dead

passed into another world  
 loss of consciousness

started laughing at him  
 at the QP  
 at everyone

I can't be angry with what you did. I only hate the results.  
 By that time you won't even be around  
 you have a rather cute way of getting out of things

not enough to work with

Where is everybody tonight  
 You mean Sondra  
 Where's Sondra  
 I didn't say that. If someone new comes in, I'll be amazed  
 Do you feel what I feel?  
 of course not  
 are you even close

*—THIS IS ALL A FLASHBACK!*

A star is someone who gets what she wants because she is a star!

create the feeling  
 then they can feel it too

THE DREAM SCHOOL

put the curls upon a plate



–Thea, we have to prepare you for your coming out.

I.  
[Thea

false compared  
anyone as fair

I'm not going to have sex with you. I'm gay. I don't do boys.

–She spread her legs and I just buried my face in her lustrous muff!

your envy is turning you into a witch.

–So be it. Let me cast my spell.

A        B

C

D :

M

F(M)

I've already paid for it. Can you pick it up for me.

Do you have anything?

–Why are you asking me?

–Dude, chill. I just see you around all the time. I just thought that you were the guy in the know.

–How it hanging?

–It's all there. I think that I'm being mistaken for you.

Like the time you held that girl prisoner in your place.

–Whatever you hear dude. It wasn't me who kept a girl in my place. That's story is bullshit. She showed up and wanted some free drugs and I wasn't going to give her any. So she got pissed and wouldn't leave. She just tore up my place. And then next thing I hear this story that I tied her up and held her captive. That is total bull shit.

I think that we're getting closer to the story. His stubborn resolve. If he'd just come clean.

–Why did you even go over to his place?

–It was raining or something. And I needed a ride. And the next thing I knew I was at his place. I think this was a regular thing of his. He'd get girls over to his place. They'd want some. And the next thing, they'd be doing anything that he wanted.

–How you going to write this story properly if it has nothing to do with you. You've never been to my place. You never even partied at my place.

–I'm just telling you that there were a few dudes who were mistaking me with you. I don't want to be known as some low life drug dealer.

–I not a fuckin' low life. Let me tell you.

–I think that you missed your turn.

–Let me tell you, bro', I know something about history. It's all about one thing. Just take a deep breath and you'll know what I mean. Rich man, poor man—it's all about one thing. You can smell it; you can taste it. That's all there is to it.

Then why do you want something for it.

–Sometimes when a dude's got more than he can use himself, he's got to spread it around. You know what I mean? Do a little tit for tat. You dig, bro'

He was trying to set me at ease with his vernacular. The only thing was to show me how deep he was in the whole shit. That's all he could speak now. As if all his vessels had been corrupted with the patois.

THE FACETS OF DESIRE (FORMALISM)	
X	I can predict what's going to happen next.
B	<p> = <a> [A]
Λ	I can make a living doing this. You need to get a job. –What about you? –My flesh is my job.
Ô	<a>  It's automatic. You won't be able to resist me. –Can you resist yourself.
Γ	I'm going to leave if some guy doesn't hit on me. I don't even feel wanted here. –You hate the guys that hit on you. –That's not the point. I can't stand these little freaks here.



that scepticism about policy

“I like it. It shows our freedom. What are you going to do about it?”

All day a headache had been bothering her. She kept turning the light on and off.

–I'm afraid of the dark. I wouldn't let her complaints bother me. - It's Courtenay's fault.

She was letting Courtenay back talk get to her. That's all she'd been talking about.

–She's done something serious to me. I feel damaged.

–Thea, that's ridiculous.

–No, it's not. She issued her challenge outside the Drugstore.

Somehow Thea was distracted. She only had to use her will and Courtenay's spell would have no effect.

All this comes later.

### **FRIDAY: COME WITH US AND SEE HIM**

–What are you talking about?

–Is it a party.

–No, he's a mystic.

–And we are invited.

–You can come if you want to.

–I need to work in the morning.

–I can't find a job.

–Things were like that for me when I first got here.

–The mystic will answer all your questions.

–What's his name?

–Jan.

–This is all crap. You can't deal with your fear of death.

–You can?

–I sleep in a coffin.

–I don't let it get to me. It's enough of a hell just getting up for work in the morning.

–Someone has to do it.

–I don't know how anyone can take it.

–Is this going to last?

–Jan can answer all your questions.

We all listened and waited for this marvelous moment.

–This is crap.

–You need to come with me.

–But I was expecting a party.

Jan hardly fit the chic image of the club scene. He needed a good haircut. I hated the smell of his place.

–You just get off in making these kids feel good about themselves. You make them think that you have an answer to their fears.

–I don't offer answers.

–That's bull shit. That's why they all flock to your place.

He tried to resist his vocation. But his mysticism seemed the perfect complement to their pursuit of fashion. He could make them feel that this eternal moment was more than that.

–The only thing that surprises me is that you don't bottle this for the masses.

–Crucial, you were rude to Jan.

–I thought that you were taking us to some kind of holy man. He has more problems than all of your friends combined. He's just trying to suck rich kids of their parents' money.

–I was just trying to be a friend to him. And you've hardly spoken to anyone since you've arrived here. I was just trying to make friends.

I realized that my response was too harsh. But the magic had its limits. I wanted the Cube. I got there for the last throes of a Friday night. I figured that things could only get better on Saturday.

### **SATURDAY: FLIER SHOT DOWN**

How high did the elation of one night lead into the next. If I woke up with that feeling, the beat booming in my head, I let myself become part of the night. All day I planned it. That was the need for my science, to keep it going during the day. It also helped me prolong that infinite moment when it touched us all.

–If it's infinite, why does it only exist for a moment.

–It's our moment; but the energy is infinite.

I needed to tell someone about my theory.

–The dancefloor will do the talking.

Christopher watched the dancers lost in the sweat. He wanted to join in but he needed a song with a darker element. Something that allowed him to step outside of himself. He could sense the split. Above him, he watched an observer.

–Christopher, this is your moment.

Joey was kissing his lover on the dance floor. Billy was looking for his rendez-vous.

–Where is Thea?

–In one of her moods.

–That's a bitchy thing to say.

–She's a bitch.

Some tourists wandered around. They wanted to touch flesh. They didn't understand the order. Someone could have pretended to be Thea, and they would have been equally entranced.

–Look at those two guys down there.

They watched Chris and Joey.

–I wish that one guy would come back to my place.

–He’s with a guy. You’re a girl.

–I wouldn’t mind just watching them.

–You are sick.

–Do you know where we can get some ex?

–You shouldn’t ask people that you don’t know for drugs.

He laughed. Everyone headed to the women’s washroom. I just wanted to piss.

–Has Thea’s plane gone down.

–She needs to fly. It’s going to be closing time soon.

When Thea entered, the room exploded in light.

–It’s the Second Coming.

–No, it’s creation all over again.

She hardly moved. She was carried up to the sky in a shaft of light.

THE ASSUMPTION.

–Yeah!

### **SUNDAY: THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY**

–Thea. All you can do is exaggerate. What took you so long last night.

–I hate doing this. I don’t want to come out anymore.

–So what takes you out on a Sunday.

–I knew all you all would be here. I wanted to tell my story.

–Thea has a story.

–Thea always has a story. That’s why it’s my world.

–Did you do two guys last night?

–Did you have sex with a cute little bunny.

–Kiss and tell.

–How far back do we have to go.

–To the commission of the crime.

–Or to the punishment.

–You always start with the punishment. Then you pick the crime that fits the punishment.

–I thought that’s how that work.

–So you want to exterminate my soul.

–Drive me down like a bug.

–What do you have against me?

–That would be a crime.

–Not just for today.

–Not to kill your heart.

–Hearts get broken every day.

–Thea, does your heart get broken.

–I don’t mix sex and love. I get what I want. Like I said. I get what I want.

–You better move quick or that will give him an excuse to lock on you. To suck your soul from you.

–It’s been going on forever. It’s no big deal. Hearts and souls.

–I saw the machine that can do it.

–A love machine?

–A torture machine.

–Who is this crew anyway. What a load of shit!

–Thea, I think that you’re losing your looks. You first came here at that moment of ripeness.

–You queen are all the same.

### **MONDAY: WHISPER CRUCIAL**

–Call me, call me.

I didn’t want to let in that I had discovered Thea’s weakness. More than her heart, more than her soul, she lived in a world that felt the waning of the light. She would need to make her move soon. She would have to become a spirit sooner before later.

–I am able to exist in dreams. To cross over to another realm.

–We all do that.

–I went to the Dream School.

–More bull shit philosophy.

–The Cube is at the center of the change. The world is coming to an end. I hear the announcement every night.

–It’s the big face.

–I’ve seen it in my window.

I wanted Thea to appear for me. I wanted the Dream School to make the link.

–Just tell her what you’re thinking.

–She’s almost completely made of light. I can’t tell her what I have to.

–She’s flesh and blood.

–Her flesh is drawn to other women.

–She’s just protecting herself.

–I’m not a tourist.

I wanted to become a breath. A dream. A whisper.

–What did you say to me?

–Can you feel my words shake you up?

But I was only a whisper, and the noise was too loud in the room.

### **TUESDAY: CONTEMPLATES YELLOW**

- Her hair is golden.
- Yellow.
- It's the dye.
- She is the color. The is an idea.
- I always thought that.
- Before anything is yellow, she is yellow. Therefore she is not yellow. She is the concept of yellow.
- I like that whatever it means.
- It's like a lemon candy that never loses its flavor.
- It's the flavor before you taste it.
- I want a lemon candy.
- I want to taste it.
- To taste it,.
- To think it is to taste it.
- Yellow is the taste of Thea.
- Can you color it with a crayon.
- It's light.
- It's white.
- It's on a page.
- So bright.
- To hard to look at.
- Thea is hard to look at.
- Because she is everything.
- The color yellow.
- Basically that.
- Or a pre-color.
- She is reserved for that.
- A pure yellow.
- Everything is faded except for Thea. It is her choice.
  
- It is a Tuesday night and she is not even here.
- But the lights sparkle. She is somewhere.

The ghost of Thea inhabits the night even when she is not here.

RIP could hardly concur.

-That scrawny little thing.

Although he submitted his physique to same hardy regimen.

-I'm seeking health; she just embraces death.

### **WEDNESDAY: AGENTS OF HISTORY/ ANGELS OF DEATH**

**And so we are able to advance the two sides of the coin.**

The Cube was Thea's room. It was almost by her mercy that anyone else could participate in the drama. Courtney's dance would captivate this room. What could Thea do? She saw how time was conspiring against her. But the angels held Courtney to a stricter criterion. For the time being Courtney would submit. She saw the uneasy marriage that she entered. But she had no choice but to accept the terms of the union.

–You're moving too fast. Look at her.

Thea could not be heard amidst the din.

She would accept no inevitability. The Rivalry was already accelerating its trajectory. Two suns could not coexist in this space. Courtney's light was entirely reflected and its dependence made her all the more vulnerable to cosmic disturbances. Thea had appointed herself just such a calamity.

–I don't want to hurt anyone. I just have to defend myself.

Could history penetrate the order of the universe? Or was it only human history and its application did it only reflect the larger order. Thea dispatched the angels of death to resolve this dilemma. Not subject to human psychologies, their vocation would not yield to the shifts in time.

–But the agents of history are acting at a deeper level. They provide a template for all behavior. These angels of death affect human behavior. As such, this is their agency. They act in line with human intention.

–Nevertheless, the angels do the planning for history.

–That almost contradicts the theory.

–So be it.

It was Thea's room and Courtney's dance. Courtney's orbits became more and more intricate and as such, they wove an independent path. They extricated themselves from the center.

On first glance, the untrained eye would ignore all the work established by the Titans. Billy and Thea seemed to be facing an eclipse.

–An eclipse is just an illusion for an observer. It has no effect on the primary source of light.

It was getting worse. Thea felt as if the intruder was disturbing her psyche.

–On this account, the agents of history could challenge the angels. Angels are simply facets of the psyche that try to carry out the will of the host.

Was Thea's will ruthless? Not from her perspective. Courtney was an interloper who had wandered on the scene.

–She's harmless.

His majesty had spoken. Courtney was allowed to straddle that place between the Titans and their rival factors.

–She is royalty. She's part of the Imperial Set.

–Next thing, you're going to crown her on my dance floor.

–It's not your dance floor.

–That center, that spot was mine.

–Thea, chill team.



- Chill is not part of my personality.
  - Drop an e.
  - You’re trying to invalidate my emotions.
  - It’s not strictly an emotion; it’s a mood.
- But Thea knew deeper. She had a sacred mission. She would not surrender so easily.

### **THURSDAY: WAIT IN THIS ROOM**

- RIP marveled at the spat.
- I’ve got another star in my midst. The more the merrier.
- They all realize that you’re the real force in this room.
- I am the angel of death.
- And who do you select.
- The answer is always you.

There was a problem when I got to the door. The Shark wanted to let me in, but he had been instructed to lead me downstairs. I didn’t even know that there was a downstairs. All types of discarded electrical parts and tires were down there. This was the brains of the Cube.

I sat in an empty office for a long while. I was early. But I did want to get up there to dance. Thursday was the night. Better than the weekend. They played newer music. The attitude wasn’t as frivolous as Saturday. The Imperial Set truly faced off its opposition without the security of its full team.

- You’ve been recommended.
- What?
- Have you ever had any trouble getting in?
- One night there was this punk girl at the door.
- It was a mistake. You haven’t been charged admission.
- No.
- That will be permanent. You are going to get an ID card. RIP recommended you. I had seen his performances, but I had never seen him dance.

Thea was saving her entrance for Friday and Saturday. Courtney didn’t have to hide in the crowd. She appeared to already know the Count of Verona. She had more pull than I had imagined. She was the nymph who played among the other creatures in this endless spring. Her gaze was not so intense as Thea. But as long as the Cube existed, Courtney would not be able to overcome the dominance of Lady Thea.

- I want to be royalty.
- You are the only true royal here.

What would occur on the weekend. Secrets were whispered. I was hardly privy to the intrigues of the weekend.

This was the time in history that the Cube imposed its regime.

## FRIDAY: THE LAW/OUTSIDE

Even though I was elated about being included in the circle, I had real questions about the intent of the Imperial Set.

- Sometimes I just want to say *off with her head*.
- She does have a pretty head.
- I just wonder where she keeps her guillotine.
- You didn't see it downstairs?
- I wasn't looking. That's a dungeon down there.
- Who talked to you.
- One of the managers. He was really friendly.
- It must have been a manager. I doesn't sound like an owner.

There was no official security in the Cube. One of the bartenders was a big guy. He worked in the side bar. It was in a small room adjacent to the main floor. I had seen him come over the bar a few times. But the patrons seemed pretty harmless. At least in the real world. They were all trying to wreak psychic havoc and disrupt the dream state.

This was the first day that both Courtney and Thea were in the club since Thea had laid down her edict. Courtney ignored any pronouncement by her artistically challenged nemesis. Courtney had brought another girl with her. A delectable treat. They dance just enough to get them both worked up. They would return home for Courtney to give the girl a lesson in love.

- She's all of seventeen.
- Everyone here is younger than you think.
- There were a couple of thirteen years old kids in here.
- It makes the march of history seem all the more impressive.
- I think that Thea is probably Courtney's age. But she seems like the doyenne here.
- Seventeen or eighteen?
- I'd guess seventeen for both.
- That will permit their longevity. They have started their play so much early.

Billy was fearful that the Cube was degenerating. He needed to reestablish order.

- We are all friends. Don't forget what happens in the outside world. I can't have this rivalry interfering with our lovely camaraderie.
- What about your rivalry with the Count?
- I am not his rival. He is mine. I can ignore it. He poses no threat.
- What if he withdraws his troops for the night. Takes the forces to another location.
- He is incapable.
- Be prepared.
- The Cube is intact at this moment.
- Don't fear history.
- We all do.

## **SATURDAY VIOLENCE: RANDOM VIOLENCE**

The worst thing happened early on Saturday. Some street hustler penetrated the inner sanctum. He actually pushed Christopher. He was getting ready to hit another one of the patrons with an ashtray. The bartender saw it all from his perch. He leapt over the bar and ran over to the two patrons. He arrived just in time to save the one. The Shark also came over from the door. They both dragged the offender out. This was a terrible beginning to a Saturday.

–I think everyone loves the fact that the Cube exists separate from the outside world. There are all these street hustlers down the street. I think some patrons thrive on this easy access to sex. It's all the worse on the weekends. That brings out tourists with cash. They want their entertainment.

–I want you to suck me off in my Mercedes.

–How much are you going to give me.

–I don't pay. But I do sometimes drop a few notes on the seat.

Were things that easy here?

Thea made a radiant entrance. There were already doubts whether Courtney could overshadow her excellence. She would not allow it, not yet. Her sky dance was still the rage of the night. Everyone was still entranced.

There were still enough lower rungs around her majesty that could be filled out by the other hangers on. How tight were their grips? Plenty tight. Otherwise, they would get eaten up by the outside maw of random violence.

Thea seemed to be completely transparent tonight. She totally existed as light. There was hardly any bone there. Her form just floated in the air.

–How did you manage that?

–I'm a phantom.

–Everyone should try that.

Anthea was hanging off of Chris and Joey. Joey danced like crazy in the middle of the floor.

–What's got in to him?

–Anthea, you're around us almost every second of the day. You should know better than me.

–You're there too.

–I just do it. You write about it.

Not only did she sense her competition with Thea, she was also my competition. She sought a voice for her indulgence.

–I'm not a hedonist. I'm an observer.

Who could save us?

## **SUNDAY: COUNTING THE SKELTONS**

- Thea, you're getting bone thin.
- You can't even see my bones in the light.
- You're death incarnate.
- I'm a death angel.
- You don't even eat.
- I eat the pizza on Sundays.
- She is a skeleton. I can see a piece of pizza in her stomach.
- That was really funny.
- You better watch out. Courtney is no damned skeleton.
- She's a little baby. There's nothing there.
- We're all turning into skeletons here. It makes our clothes look better.
- Talk to Billy. He has a theory about that.
- Where is he tonight?
- He met some suburban boy.
- I thought that it was just the suggestion of sex.
- I think that Billy is sick.
- A cold.
- Something more serious.
- It happens.
- Billy is just morose.

The gang gathered around the food table by the back bar. Only RIP and I were dancing. They were playing producer-style disco. Big bass beats and high female vocals.

- I never am allowed to play this on the weekends.
- That's because you only play if someone's sick. Sunday's your night.

I never made requests. It was the DJ's floor. I let him rule the night. For moments, RIP and I seemed in the same room. But we heard the music so differently.

-Some day there is going to be the best party here. The Cube is the most wonderful place in the world.

-It's some dive disco with cheap flashing lights. We think it's different, then we get some kid in here from Macon to remind us what we are about.

- Did you see his shoes?
- I think that he's wearing Nikes.
- That is really crass.
- They're all kinds of funny colors.
- Who brought the party flavors.
- Favors.
- I'm the favor for the night.

They all laughed as they wiped pizza from their mouths.

- Look at Thea go.
- Thea has to take a piss.
- Miss Thea don't take no piss; she just evaporates.

Where had the excitement from Saturday gone. There were no beach boys gawking at me tonight. But there was nothing here to turn me on.

–What about your fascination with Thea?

–It’s still alive. It’s just that she gets caught among the other skeletons tonight.

The Count rode in at this moment. He came in the front door.

–Where have you been?

He didn’t want anyone to see him eating tonight. He had avoided the herd.

### **MONDAY: STARS AND RADIATION**

The Shark was still my guide.

–I never see you talking to anyone.

–It’s like stars and radiation. You get too close, and you’re irradiated. Death is the next thing.

–You don’t want to die in front of them.

–I need my moments of solitude.

–When you dance, it seems like solitude.

–Some guy once wondered if I needed money.

It was like watching the TV from too close. I longed for that completeness. But if I got any closer, I would burn up in all that heat. I needed to wait for my moment of entry.

The geometry was already setting in. Thea grabbed her center position. Everything seemed to spin around her. I tried to reach the outer most point so I could observe it all. Courtney and Billy sent waves of contrary gravitations. How could all this turmoil coexist?

It was a bleak Monday. I had walked down to the club in the drizzle. Only RIP and I were victims of the night. We each did our dance with sense of solace and professional acknowledgment.

I imagined the Cube without its hierarchy. For the moment, RIP was the only testament of its legacy. Even he had an uneasy alliance with the rest of them. This was his life, his work. They paid him 50 dollars a night to haunt the place. Even on slow nights like this. The rest of them existed at the fringe of the economy. Some of them were rolling in money. Inheritance, trust funds, divorce settlements. Others lived on that uneasy edge. Theft, credit card fraud, bad checks, selling drugs, shoplifting. The key was not to let anyone know the difference. Nice clothes and willing flesh were a perfect substitute for whatever anyone lacked.

I thought about Audra in her impeccable hats. She was paid well as the hostess of a luxury restaurant. She wanted to push the night as far as it would bend. But the daytime crept into her equation. That’s how it had to be. She was a pillar in the scene. They needed her because of her style. She always had money. She knew when to call it quits. All her virtues helped her adapt vice to her purpose. Audra was the model of her age. She even appeared to model herself after a perfectly ordered character type. Hence, she was also a foil to Anthea.

Anthea knew the book all too well. She realized how critical were her variations. For

romantic love, she substituted her devotion to two gay men.

–Do you want me to put on the French maid’s costume and read poetry.

–Poetry is our strong suit.

She wanted to write the script that would feed Audra her dialogue.

–How does Anthea make money?

–We don’t ask.

No one wanted to ask questions even if they did now and then.

## **TUESDAY: ARRESTED FOR PASSING POLITICAL LITERATURE**

I wondered so many of the women, Thea, Courtney, were drawn to those of their same sex. I watched Connie rebuff a guy and then head home with another woman. Connie was tan and exposed her midriff. He blonde hair also sparkled in the bright light. She had led her boy around with her. But she refused to give in to his habits.

–Don’t you work in a hair salon?

At this time of night, no one worked.

–We listen to industrial music.

I wondered what they meant. Test Department or Throbbing Gristle.

–We love Adrian Sherwood productions.

I think that a couple of punks had watched the goings on of weekend night with disgust.

–Shouldn’t you boys be at the Metropolis.

–With Superman.

All the queens laughed.

–Don’t you guys read.

–We do what we have to.

That Tuesday, they returned. One actually had a book with him. He was talking about it with the Shark.

–Who let these two in?

–I didn’t. They came in the front door. Is there a problem?

–No politics in the bar.

–You have gay mags everywhere.

–I know. But you guys smell.

–You didn’t say that when you were sucking our dicks on Saturday night.

–You have to leave.

There had to be more to this.

–I think they were under age.

–Didn’t you card them.

–They came in the other door.

–I think that he left his post for a while. But if you stopped the underagers, you’d have an empty bar.

- That's why Kevin has to be selective.
- Didn't Kevin used to be a bar back.
- A punk kid.
- And now he's a manager.
- There may be some personal shit going on.

- What were those guys doing?
- They had these political fliers for some rally. Stop racism or something.
- Isn't the Cube all about that sort of shit. Racism. Homophobia. It all has the same root cause. Guys who can't take a real look at themselves.
- I think that there's more to it all.

### **WEDNESDAY:THE BIARRITZ**

The Cube returned to it regular brash self on Wednesday. Christopher didn't have to work the next day. He requested some Sisters of Mercy. Stuff that they wouldn't have played on the weekend.

He was dancing all alone when I also hit the floor. I wouldn't say anything to him. We both knew what it was all about. More than the disco. Something angry and dissonant.

I wondered if he worked retail. I had seen him talking with Brett. Brett worked at Rich's. I had seen him down there, and we nodded to each other.

- We're not trendy here. We're just up on new music.

Brit hair boy was in an argument about his love of synth pop. Depeche Mode days were coming to a close, but he was hanging on.

- What is next?

Christopher joined the conversation.

- I like the Butthole Surfers.

- I can't buy albums. I don't have a place to live.

- You can sleep at my place if you need to crash.

- I'm not looking for a Sugar Daddy.

Brit hair wouldn't reveal his resources. But he had been cut off from his trust fund, and he was accustomed to retail. Brett could only imitate such nonchalance. 6 AM hit you pretty hard each morning if you've stayed out until 3AM.

- Thea, why do you only have sex with women.

-I don't to both questions. But women don't make these fake demands. I don't have to be a goddess to them. And there's always a girl needs a shoulder to cry on. A good cry and some kissing. It's the beginning to a hot night. Cute girls who aren't trying to fuck me up. I never have to come down.

She refused to gamble with her happiness. This was her Riviera. Her sun and coddled sands. She tossed off her shoes and started to dance in the midst of the midweek revelers.

- There's no point to your life.

–There’s only a need for a point if this is going to end. This will go on for ever.  
 She was dressed all in white. The glare surrounded Thea. There would be no let down.  
 NEVER.

A goddess.

–You don’t want to be a goddess. Child, you live on Olympus.

–I live as I need to live. I just want to be myself.

–To be yourself the way that you are, you need to be blessed.

–Then bless me and let me dance.

Did she need a limo at her door. In heels and followed by a white poodle, she made her way down the promenade.

–Is my boat here.

–Are you all here?

–What? Do you want to all watch me have sex again?

–I think that is some kind of male prerogative. Then there is something to watch.

–Shut up, Billy. I don’t want to see your cock.

–But you’d suck it if I showed it to you.

–No way, no time.

–That didn’t stop some guy from muff diving you on the upstairs bar.

–I don’t want to hear that story.

–It hurt.

–I thought he was a girl. I was fucked up. And in the darkness, his long hair made him look like Audra.

–As if you are ever going to get Audra going down on you anywhere. She won’t even let a guy kiss her breasts.

–She’s not a virgin.

–She’s Southern proper.

–So am I.

–Not! Thea, you are a whore.

–I don’t do guys. I save my flower.

–The flower is wilting.

#### **THURSDAY: THE GRUESOME PART**

–The gruesome part is taking a look at that shriveled up pussy of yours.

–Pussy, pussy, pussy, pussy, meow. Billy, you can’t deal with female anatomy.

–I have all the anatomy that I need. And better hair.

–Your hair feels like barbed wire.

–It is luxuriant. Run your fingers through it.

–Then give you a hand job. No thanks! You probably eat your lover’s shit. After all, you’re already licking his ass.

–Thea, I’ve heard about those golden showers.

–Gold is the color of my hair in the light. Not something that I run over my body.



–You too inflated queens need to stop. It’s only Thursday. Save your tiff for the weekend.

–Thea’s needs to save it all for the weekend.

–I’m going to go dance.

–You do that, girl. We’re all watching.

–I think that you hit a nerve with her.

–I just tell it like it is.

–But she can’t keep up. You’re just a shit.

–I’m the King.

–For how long. Until your prick falls off.

For the rest of the night, Billy was really morose. He didn’t like to contemplate death. He was having too much fun. But he sensed that something was really wrong. For the moment, he could hardly remember the names of these characters who surrounded him.

### **FRIDAY: WAKE UP CALL**

No one had been tracking her for a while, but Christina von Mayhem was coming up in the world. Worse than Courtney, she was developing her group of allies. Her style had developed and made up for whatever she lacked in sparkle. She had exchanged her suburban boots for classy Italian footwear. Even if you weren’t dazzled by her set, you had to realize how she was coming on. She looked more regal than any Edwardian. Multi-layered hats. Ruffles. Flair. All came together in this lovely mass of ribbon.

–Where is the Count? Where is Billy? I want a crown.

–The key, girl, is not to peak too early. It’s only Friday.

She was already prevailing in the room. But none of the Royals had shown up.

–I will be their wake up call.

She was already pretty drunk by the time that Billy and the Count rolled in. Her advantage was her love of pain, and she was ready to inflict some mayhem.

–I will damage them.

She was pretty damaged by 1:30. Some tourist was taking advantage of her on the couch upstairs. She could hardly see what was happening down on the dance floor. What was happening to her brilliant strategy.

Billy needed to get back his mastery. No amateur was going to prove a threat on a weekend night. He even whipped the Count into shape. They prepared some mime piece complete with the fairy dances behind them. Sex and monarchy all in one work. What could Christina do under the circumstances. Her private drama was immersed in denouement, and she was coming apart in front of everyone. June and Anne had deserted her early on. Only Linda could provide the needed remedy.

She was rushed home in hopes that a Saturday night recovery would make her the true center of the party.

### **SATURDAY : LINDA: THE FUN’S OVER**

Linda wanted to prove how easy it was to devastate the Imperial Set. The revolt was entirely too premature. If Christian prevailed, that would prove a swift death to the Titans. The challenge was hardly formidable. Christina was a comer and needed to be exposed as such.

Billy planned a masquerade ball at the Cube. Only the in set were informed. Christina showed up at the witching hour and refused to get distracted from her dedicated task. She was entirely flabbergasted when the Count led the procession in. Christina's problem was that she was trying to compete. I just enjoyed the festivities. The Count was dressed as a lecherous bird. Billy had on a crown. He was laughing like crazy as they carried him in on a throne. Chris and Joey were almost naked. Anthea was a harem girl. The rest of the set were outfitted as cards in a deck. Even Christopher had been warned, and he showed up in a vintage tux and tails.

Christina wanted to throw cake at all of them.

–I know magic.

They all laughed. By the end of the evening, she realized that she had been beaten. She and Christopher were invited to be part of the final dance. The match made in hell.

Linda watch bemused. Her star pupil had failed her exam. But the final result was startling. It invigorated the scene. Christina seemed to blend in as if they all had planned this together.

Poor Thea. She was still the center of the evening. She came in as Cinderella with a pumpkin shaped carriage. But there were so many dazzling stars in one night that she had trouble shining.

–I'll have to find a suitable girl for my night.

–Denial would be your best course.

Linda looked longingly at Thea.

### **SUNDAY: A REASON TO ALL THIS**

RIP was left to pick up the pieces. For Sunday night, he rode in as a space age gangster. Rock on with the mother shit!

–All the King's horses and all the King's men could put RIP back together again. What do you think of that Thea.

I realized that my distraction was becoming deeper. I still hadn't found work. Monday morning glared at me.

–Why am I doing this?

No one would come out tonight after such a crazy Saturday.

Audra came in around 12:15 for a quick drink. I watched her at the bar as I danced. She knew where she was going to be in the morning. I would still be asleep. I needed to do some writing. Where had my creativity gone?

Courtney had been tucked away somewhere on Saturday night. She could take over on Sunday. Her and a couple of friends rummaged through the tacos.

–We don't want to pay for food tonight.

One guy went over to talk to Audra. Courtney did her magic dance. She exorcized the

ghosts of the night before. She would need her skills against the demons to come. Was she a threat to Billy or the Count. Hardly. The only issue was what she would do to Thea's popularity. Thea's rise had been based on her image. Her almost immobile stance. She was a statue.

Courtney was plastic. She made the earth rumble. She came from the earth. Thea came from the sky. But she also had the same lightness of air as Thea. She linked the two order.

As I danced with Courtney, away from Courtney, I wondered about parking in downtown Atlanta. I had the perfect excuse to drive down there and drive right home.

### **MONDAY: DEADLY IN THE SUPERMARKET**

–I didn't know that you worked here.

Celine stared at me.

–Who do you work for?

–I'm not working.

–So you're just being deadly in the supermarket.

–I saw RIP in here earlier.

–Does he drive a hearse?

–No, he's just deadly in the supermarket as well.

We both laughed.

–Do you have money.

–I have credit cards.

–That works for a while. I used to be homeless. Then I got this job. Changed my life around. I never actually did a trick. But I did have sex with some guys that I stayed with. I liked them. They were my lovers. Nothing too serious.

–I wanted to buy some fish.

–The tuna looks great.

–How about swordfish?

–It's really tender. So fresh.

Celine was friends of Veronica.

–Ver doesn't come out too much. But she will. She's astounding.

I would save that story for later. It had been a useless Monday. But here I was appearing at the Cube again. Could I be as deadly in the Cube?

Last night I saw this punk sweetheart at the Cube. I sat down, and she came to sit next to me. This was to be my eternal impasses. Did I really think that she was cool enough for the Cube. She had her style. I was afraid that she was drinking herself to death. I needed an excuse.

–I wanted to break the boundaries. I wanted to get close to death. But not her death.

### **TUESDAY: KILLING CLOTHES**

I saw Brett down at Rich's today. We still didn't talk. I went down there for work. I filled out an application, and the I skipped out.

–What are you doing?

A clerk approached me with a smile.

–Heavens, what are you doing?

–I’m killing the clothes.

–Don’t I see you out at night?

–You do.

–What does this mean killing the clothes.

–Some of these clothes are so bad. I’m just killing them off so no one cool will wear them.

–Don’t worry. No one cool would be caught dead in this shit. We’ve got some great designer stuff over there.

–And I left my wallet at home.

–I know how much all this shit costs. You can buy one outfit, and just wear it for weeks.

–Not when you go out every night.

–Every night. How do you manage it?

–I don’t spend all my money on clothes and drinks.

We both smiled knowingly.

I was still affecting my alienated look. It gave me an identity. And I was careful about my dance. I knew my geometries. I had planned these twists long ago. When the right song came on, I twisted my body in a ball, and then just shot out. I spun around again and again.

–No one will stop me.

What could Thea or Courtney do against such an onslaught?

Nothing. It was only Tuesday night. No one was there.

No witnesses except for RIP, and he was watching himself in a mirror.

I headed for the grocery store after the club closed. RIP was there in leather pants and boots. He made this clicking sound as he walked the aisles. We both looked at each other without saying a word. We were in our killing clothes.

### **WEDNESDAY: KILLED IN IMAGINATION**

*We are all in the Cube. It is more narrow and longer than ever.*

–*This is all a result of **DREAM SCHOOL**.*

–*It just gives us all a chance to die together.*

–*They’ve called us all together to tell us the world is going to end.*

–*It’s just going to melt.*

–*Like cheese on a pizza.*

*Despite the humor, I could feel the chill cut through me. I felt like a refugee from David Bowie’s “Ashes to Ashes” video.*

–*I don’t want to think that this is the end.*

–*You’re bleeding.*

–*No, I’m not. I’m just nervous.*

–*You're just going to vaporize.*

–*We all will.*

There was no free food on Wednesday's. Just a chance to deny the rigors of work.

–I did work. But I can't keep up to hours.

–Do you sell drugs to live.

–I live off savings. A great job for one year can be a bad one for three. Save the money and spend it over two years of unemployment. It's my version of trickle down. Down, down, down!

### **THURSDAY: THE REAL QUEEN**

–I thought that the end of the world was going to take longer.

–We needed more of a tragedy if we were going to pull it off.

–We could have blown up the Cube.

–Then we would have nowhere to go and cry.

–Shed no tears for my death. I'm coming to a quick end.

–Who is the real queen?

–Thea wishes.

–She's a girl. With girl problems. She can't be a real queen.

–A real queen has to pretend better.

–Thea can pretend to get off.

–She can fake anything except love.

–She is loved. She is LOVE. She does not have to love.

–Thea is a machine,

–She's not a machine. She's pure energy. She has no moving parts.

–She has gone beyond.

–The brightest star in a constellation.

–She is not a real queen.

–A jewel in the crown.

–The King's crown.

–Billy would like that.

–Queen of the poor!

–Queen of the diamonds.

–Queen of the Queens.

–Let's all come dressed up as Thea tonight.

–Honey, you will never be that thin.

–I didn't get a breast job to look like that rail.

–I think that she looks like a boy.

–You haven't seen it naked.

–And you have?

–Who's the real queen here?

- How long do we need to keep talking this shit?
- Until the weekend comes.
- Until they bring out the food.
- Then we'll find out who the real queen is. You can just stuff that fucking hole.
- I don't take no dick in this hole.
- Spoken like a true queen.
- I hate all those freaky little punk kids. They don't even shower. They don't tip. And they are lame ass ugly,.
- Amen.
- That's why they all look like Bela Lugosi.
- Herman Munster.
- Fright night.

### **FRIDAY: YOU EXTERMINATE THEM**

- You get a pesticide and the roaches just get resistant to it. They evolve.
- Have you seen the little suckers in here before the place opens.
- They love beer.
- How much are you making in here a night?
- On the good nights three or four hundred. I won't work the weekdays. I'll do Thursday and Sunday. Four nights a week. I make almost two thousand a week.
- You exaggerate.
- OK—at least a thousand.
- A lot of kids in here don't have a cent.
- I take them home with me at night. A regular orgy at my place.
- I always knew that you were a pig.
- Exaggeration.
- You suck dick for cash. That's where you get your thousand.

He looked at me with that weird stare.

- That kid who comes in here all the time. Someone needs to kill that ugly fuck.
- His face makes me want to puke.
- He always leaves by himself.
- He never talks to anyone.
- No one would miss him.
- We could kill him just like a cockroach.
- Then our pest problem would be gone.
- There's more of his type outside.
- The zombies.
- That's why there's a door policy.

### **SATURDAY: KNIFE THREAT**

The bartenders already knew that I'd be drinking a Perrier when I went up for a drink. They smiled and handed me one. I didn't have much with me, but I tipped a dollar.

There were rumors that some outlander had pulled a knife on a star in the bathroom. The owner's friend was this giant. He and a couple of the bartenders escorted the trouble maker out of the bar.

–Who did they threaten?

–One of the Count's friends. He thought that he was going to kill someone important.

–So much for a palace coup.

–I think a lot of these people want an early death.

–That's why we're all here. The Cube is like a funeral resting place.

R.I.P.

–That's who they would try to assassinate first.

–He even says it about himself. His leather and his mohawk. He's already a fatality.

–RIP is beyond the night.

There would be no Cube without RIP. He made the plunge into the night special. He knew this is why everyone came. Everyone retreated in facing the deep hole of darkness. On that really bleak night, there was only RIP and me and the **END OF THE WORLD**.

–You know that to keep this entertaining, we need new blood. But the new blood will destroy us.

–We are beyond entertainment. We just need ourselves.

–But if we are totally complete, then we are obviously moved by a sustaining force.

–That's why I watch TV. It takes the weirdest situations and gives them a purpose.

Love. Even divorce.

–The bull shit about the foster kids taking to the new parent.

–Orphans in the stream.

–That's why we come to the CUBE. It's a big TV.

–And we're staring out.

–Looking at ourselves in the mirror.

–Then the lights blast off.

–Like a rocket ship.

–Billy, you are our rocket ship.

–And Thea is the astronaut.

–Dig it.

### **SUNDAY: I DISCOVER HER**

–Have we discovered a star?

–In our midst?

–Take a look.

What were they referring to? We already had the list with its cast of characters: Thea.

The Count, Anthea, Audra, King Billy, Joey, Chris and now Courtney. Who was missing. Sure there were the supporting staff. The Shark. Christina. June. Anne. Christopher. Someone had to be missing from the group. Some new stellar presence.

–No one cares about the newcomers. We have enough to occupy ourselves.

Billy's concern was again preeminent. How could he make himself more self-sufficient. This new mysticism overruled his thoughts. Under such terms, no new appearances would interfere with his regime.

–That's not really fair.

–Its not as if he had that much to do with how people act around here.

–I guess you are right.

–There is no guessing involved. I know that I am right. Ignore. Discover what you need to for yourself.

I had already watched Thea dazzle everyone in the Cube. Courtney's disruptive presence was equally welcome in provoking suspense. We were all attentive to the rivalry as a source of deeper revelation.

–Everyone who comes in here is a star. But they feel fucking intimidated by our little dolls. And these prancing queens surrounding them. Royalty. We're all the same. We all bleed. We all have heart.

RIP was incensed by the girl's arguing.

–Someone is going to end up getting hurt from all their misery.

–RIP, you're not much different. Don't you think that people get intimidated in here and standing on stilts.

–I'm not on stilts.

–You know what we're talking about.

–Each night a new girl comes in here who's just as much a star as Thea or whomever.

I was looking for that ripple of excitement tonight. It wasn't happening. What was RIP talking about?

### **MONDAY: ABSTRACT DESIRE**

My time with EA had prepared me for the ritual of the Cube. I was already submitting to its gruesome search for perfection. More than an image or a high, this perfection was based on a desire for an integral wholeness. This was the addiction. The abstract desire. And it made its way felt in the immediacy of these mannequins. To thin to be. I was losing myself in their obsessions. My own search had lost its ground and now floated on the illusions of floating light. I spent days trying to explain my new fascination.

–If you had only talked to EA, things might have been different. That was the fall out of your time with Regina. You said to much to her. And she never said anything back.

–It wasn't the right moment for EA.

–But it will be with Thea. You are waiting too long. She is slipping away too.

I didn't want to think that my pursuits were veering towards the abstract. Even Thea noticed how she was becoming immersed in light.

–These are only effects of an absurd fascination. Closer to an obsession. But there is a



physical cause. Almost like a mercury poisoning.

- What are you talking about?
- Something that thins the blood and makes the skin almost white. The bones transparent.
- I thought it was the beholder's disease.
- We are attracted to the bizarre. The out of the ordinary.
- Just say extraordinary.
- Freaks of nature.
- Or of the supernatural.
- So if it's not Thea, it's EA.
- And if it's not EA, it's Regina.
- And if it's not Gina, it's Francine.
- We are regressing.
- Animal blood on the walls.
- This is all becoming too contagious.

Even my notion of the self was locked in the gratification of desire. What was immediate and assertive was now giving way to what was tentative and long term. The act gave way to the wait. I was waiting for a gesture from Thea, the right moment from Courtney.

More than that I was subject to their narratives. I only watched as they made their play. I could only chronicle.

I wonder if Anthea suffered from the same anguish. She could use the male lovers as her subject. But her own whims seemed so little to do with the night.

She wandered in by herself on this Monday. I wanted to compare notes. I wondered about the happenstance that had brought her in the door at that moment. Most of all, I wanted to break this dominant impasse with the Titans.

–You haven't bought a vest yet. Or a cravat. You're never going to be allowed in the group.

Who was Anthea talking to. Was her appearance only my imagination. Could I ever share a desire for her. Our paths were too close. We both observed the wild Thea in her habitat.

## **TUESDAY: HEART OUT OF METAL**

I passed by a strip of highway where the guard rail had been mangled. It looked like a semi had shaped the metal to its liking. The pieces of metal were all bent out of their intended form. There were even clumps of metal on the grass. The occasion had been completely accidental. But the construct was in line with the rather bizarre sculpture of the steel. The truck had spoken a language independent of its driver.

Much later in the day I saw a car abandoned in the median. Its windshield was mercilessly cracked, the side panel was bashed in. The driver had been trashed out of his mind. He just left the car there and wandered home. When he came to, he had no idea how he had arrived home. He looked out at the driveway as he had no recollection where he had left his car.

Her heart was fashioned out of metal according to her desires. It was a heart that would not collapse under the weight of the fiercest collision. She liked to think of herself as an artist. And her hands worked inside her to place this artefact. She was proud of its detail. Of its resistance to illusion. It made her feel more powerful that she had a role in her own creation. She had hesitated about using such a rigid substance. But it was credit to the artist how the geometry curved and twisted to match her emotions. She could be sentimental. But she would not be buried by her sentimentality.

She took pride in what she had learned by watching the collisions of the soul. These she embodied in her work. As much as her heart was a nexus of passion, it was also a heterogenous coming apart. So the sculpture had its disunity.

Others sought to complete her. To make whole what was meant to be fragmented. That was why she hated guys. She couldn't put it all into words. That is why she spoke with her art. But her intent was evident. If the art was a sculpture, then everything else about her was part of a story. She was living her fiction moment by moment. That was what the Cube meant. Not just that everyone had a story, but that every player had worked to string together this story into a coherent text. Each player had a novel. Hers was more prolific. That was why anyone who observed her could see as much. At the core was the heart. But the rest of her story needed to embody the same chaos that was rendered in the heart. So her fiction was just that. To the idle reader, he might doubt the coherence. But that was the genius of her hand. She could do the same thing with words that she had done so confidently with the heart. The majority of her self-assurance was in the zeal not to surrender her voice to a constraining order. She was not afraid to let it all hang suspended in the air. This was the beauty of its gravity.

I had been invited to the Cube to share these narratives with the world. I could transcribe what might otherwise remain silent. Thea, my wonder.

–She looks a lot like Thea.

–But the hair is different. Thea has short hair that she combs down, so it appears to shape her head. Courtney actually has much shorter hair. Not a buzz, but it is just a little bushy. Like a koala bear.

–That girl is not Courtney.

–Connie has blonde hair.

–A very similar look. But Connie is a little more rugged than Thea. She looks healthy. Thea seems to embrace death. Connie has a tan. A sun glow. Thea glows with the moon.

### **WEDNESDAY: FOLLOWS HIM OUT TO HIS CAR**

–I've seen you here quite a bit. Do you come on your own?

–We all do?

–I'm an artist. I paint. I love coming here after I work just to observe. I like to watch the dancers. They're great dancers here. They're so self-conscious. These boys—they are performing for me.

I listened to his arguments.

–Come on out to the back. It’s hard to hear in here with the music.  
 It had just stopped raining. Hardly anyone had shown up because of the weather.  
 –I’ve got one of my works in my car.

Tri had lured Connie out here with drugs.

–Take you top off.

She smiled. She had toned her body for the other women to look at. She was amused by Tri’s attention.

–You like what you see.

–You haven’t shown me anything.

–Aren’t you with Beth. She’s beautiful.

–We’re not getting along.

–Guys are always saying that. They never get along. Do you want me to give you a blow job in the parking lot.

–People are looking.

–No one is looking. And it’s just not going to happen.

–I just wanted someone to do drugs with.

–Do you like my body.

–You’ve got a great body.

–I’ve shown you my breasts. That’s all you’re going to see.

–Do you like to get fucked up?

–You’ve got to learn another routine.

–I’ve got tricks. Feel my arm muscles. I’ve been working out.

She wanted him inside her. She hated that coldness of guys. She took a bump just to give her ability to let it go. To just get out of the car and go back to the bar. She had an excuse. For those other girls who wanted more, Tri would put up a fight. He always got what he wanted. It made it all seem so easy. That’s why she exposed herself. She wanted to show him that she could draw the line. Thea would have never come out here. Nor Courtney. But a hell of other girls had made it out here with Tri. His body was part of the reason. They could explain their wandering. They could explain his wandering. And Beth was oblivious up to now. Trust was simply a physical thing. That he could give her what she wanted more intensely than anyone. I loved the perfection in her eye. I loved what she thought that she had.

#### **THURSDAY: LOSE TRACK OF TIME**

The door closed, and you were in the Cube. There was no time in the Cube. There was only time.

The club opened at 10 PM and closed at 4 AM. Sometimes earlier if no one was there. After 4, they sound you back into the night. For the hours of deep time, they cast us back into the night. For the hours of action, the patrons resisted their eventual exile. They lived separate from the clock. You could not lose time. You could only live this time, here.

Before opening, the disco lights were just on—no flashing. Cockroaches slid along the bar. Too much glare. Too much light. The seconds ticked. It was absurd to arrive too early.

Most people didn't show up until after midnight. There was no head start from the early hours. People from other cities wandered in with the hope that there might be some early fun. There would be none. You needed a script to actually play here.

Without the Titans, you wish that you could lose time here. Maybe Courtney would casually wander in with her entourage. But not tonight. The rain was beating down outside. There was a summer chill inside. The Shark was half asleep at the door. Ben was making sure everything at the bar was in order. RIP was doing his death dance.

–The Cube is all about death. But no one knows it.

I sat across from RIP. I was not watching him. I was staring. I was hoping for someone to come in. I could not lose myself in the night. I just wanted to head up the street home.

Audra snuck in while I let myself wander. She had a couple of guys from work with her. I watched them try to make a party go.

It was Thursday night. But the rain was scaring everyone else away. I couldn't wait any longer myself. I left. I prematurely embraced the night.

### **FRIDAY: ANTHEA'S THEA MASK**

I had made it through another week without a job. I had tried for what it's worth. My money was low, and credit was running out. I needed magic.

Anthea left no doubt tonight. She showed up wearing a Thea mask. She even had on a wig. At first, no one was the wisest. But the lights could not hide the fact. She played up the masquerade. She had these big gestures that mocked Thea. I think that I got a kick out of it. Thea was not there. She could not be. In a way, she never had been there. It was all part of Anthea's imitation. This was her other personality. She pulled it off to a T. The T in Thea.

Even as she became a nuisance, no one could stop her. It proved how darling Thea had become for us all. It would be impossible to replace her. But all the gestures were in place.

Everyone had got over the summer rains that had deluged the week. Friday meant that work could be left behind. A few hardy souls would have to go in on Saturday morning. But a good buzz could help them through a terrible morning of doing hair. A big beat would shut it all out and make it seem that the club was going early in the day.

RIP made his way through the club as if to establish order. Things were getting out of hand. He had to keep it all fun and games. Of course, it was different for him. This was his life all the time. The rest were only temporary visitors, those that he allowed to come in.

–He doesn't own the place.

–He might as well.

–I don't like his idea of order.

–Whatever do you mean.

–He's acting like our parent.

–I think that we’re forgetting how to draw the line. He’s just reminding us in a friendly way.

He was also charting out the territory for himself. Thea had already made his act seem in doubt. Now everyone else was exaggerating their psychologies on the dance floor. Someone needed to put a stop to that.

For those who hardly made it to the Cube, it must have seemed so confusing. Anthea’s performance and RIP’s big brother routine. These were character normally taken by unbridled hedonism. But they had to pull the bridle on everyone else.

### **SATURDAY: I’M NOT WORRIED/ IT’S NOT HAPPENING TO ME**

Anthea had shaken up everybody’s sensibilities. Now it was up to King to return the merriment to its rightful level. Thea had caught wind of her Friday night replacement. She was too preoccupied with other rivals to worry about Anthea’s silliness. Even with a mask, she could hardly assume the coveted role at the Cube. Billy knew that Thea would be pulling out all the stops, so he needed to get out of her way. Here suffering was primarily a visual thing. If you couldn’t show it, you didn’t feel. Therefore, it was all the more incumbent to let the show stay just that—a show. If it wasn’t happening to you, then it just wasn’t happening. Sure there was a big bad world outside, but the conventional wisdom was to ignore it. In fact, just the outside troubles made everyone feel just out of the weather enough to make them susceptible to the constant party favors thrown her way. The world was majorly fucked up, so everyone at the Cube needed to get royally fucked up.

A night of pure pleasure only feeds on misery. Everyone did their best at hiding whatever drove people crazy on Friday. That was why Saturday was so delicious. Everyone could ignore the week before and concentrate on pure partying.

In this place, if one person was suffering, everyone was suffering. Oh, God, save us!

Maybe the best drug would be one that made a person suffer, to remind her how deep feelings can go. This would be an exquisite pleasure.

The Imperial Set would talk about everyone this and everyone that as well as anyone. But were the pleasures of the Cube actually open to everyone. We all wondered. Perhaps, you needed that special fate if you were really ready for what the Cube had to dish out for you.

CM had transformed herself to suit the comings and goings of the Cube. But her friends had watched helplessly as it all went on around them. Maybe drugs alone would be the ticket. It could transform the ordinary into the poetic. CM had already succumbed to the temptation. For Anne or June, if the more potent the dose, the more real the participation. This was to be the new game.

With the ease of pleasure came a desire to confirm that the results were real. More evidence was needed. The sale of the flesh needed to follow the submission of the soul. You could do your damned best to hide your mental state. You could never hide your actual intrigues from the watchful eyes of these voyeurs.

### **SUNDAY: SUCH A TRAMP**

As long as dalliance remained in the circle, there would be no condemnation. But it was like hiding the ice cream from yourself. If no one saw your assignations, they might as well have not taken place. The most extreme glutton would seem to be denying herself nourishment.

–Do not speak ill of your other girls.

Audra wanted to effect an unwritten rule. But that would ruin the fun for most everyone. There would be no Titans if someone didn't mock their behavior. No one wanted to be caught with their pants down. Especially before the court of public opinion.

Even Cube girls who still used the word straight found it politics to leave with other girls never a guy. *Shacking up* seemed to be the worst condemnation for these socialites. If there was to be sexual congress, it had to be in secret and hopefully when everyone was drunk.

–Is Courtney into girls or boys tonight.

–I really don't know. I never noticed which side of sky the sun rose on this morning.

And it was such a topsy turvy world.

One would hardly call it tramping around to taste the delights of male flesh. So the worst condemnation was for males cruising girls in the Cube.

–You mean I'm not a tramp.

–Heaven knows, Thea. You only have to turn your head and Courtney has some new beau on her arm.

–Or gnawing on her arm.

The rumors were actually more pronounced. But that was just part of a day's work. Everyone wondered about the inimitable Ganglia.

–You got a boyfriend.

He mumbled.

–If you're not going to come back to my place, there's another girl over there who will.

How could anyone fail to elude his clumsy continental charms. It was a bad comedy skit. But sure enough, he always seemed to be raking it in. Literally. He tried to scam cars and jewelry off of the unsuspecting young things.

–Won't anyone save them.

–Sometimes a girl just needs what a girl needs.

–And what could that be,

–I've seen him leave one girl's place in the morning and head over to another before lunch. Then he's driving her expensive convertible downtown.

–But he's just too obvious to be a tramp. He's not even a Don Juan.

–Someone is going to beat the shit out of him one of these days.

–I'm not really worried.

As he whispered in her ear, he passed his hand along her back. In the shiver, she hoped that he would grasp her and hold her.

–There she goes!

Thea stood perfectly still so the ray of light blasted off her and then returned a shower to the rest of the room.

–She couldn't do that if she was up to mischief.

–I'm just waiting for the dawn.

### **MONDAY: POWER TO MEDIATE**

Anyone who really thought that Thea would admit any rivals was in to have her world shattered. There was one queen of the sunshine. She allowed no equals. So Courtney would have to slip in on those off nights.

Her dance was getting more intricate. Turns that she learned from ballet came easily on the floor. We never saw her leap, but we awaited the moment when she might fly.

Each night there was moment that I realized that these were all the players. No one else would be coming through the door. More than that realization, there was that sinking anticipation as the door opened and closed. I spent much of my time staring in that direction. RIP was in his own world. He pushed beyond live into his nether zone. He was practicing magic. I was the non-believer. Thea was seldom to be expected. If just some imitator could make it through. A rainy night and the pockets of nothingness gripped even tighter. Songs that had already grown tired on the weekend still thumped their beat. In the empty room, there was the strangest echoes of each piece of music. It could not get the ghost out there.

I would copy a pattern that I had observed in Courtney. Or I could be Thea's center of light. But the effects of boredom would eventually take over. There was a time when I was perfecting my dance. And I still took to polishing the variations.

–Everything seemed perfect.

A confession needed a speaker. In the empty room, no one would take up the cry. This could be the moment of mediation between the two rivals. Or Billy could realize the vast limits on the Imperial Set. Weren't the conditions of the this Monday night a testament to the very limits of their doctrine. What they lived was temporary based on their time between work and sleep. If they pushed the equation, they hardly slept. And then the day was this technicolor nightmare. But nothing about their regime indicated a desire for anything more. Making it perfect wasn't all that perfect. Just to have it explode that night and carry them over to the next day, the next week

They couldn't let things get out of hand. The night still imposed its yoke.

Just a little more, a sliver of light before utter darkness. That would make things seem perfect. It was not the rivalry with Thea that was preeminent. I realized the presence of a more urgent phantom, and I would do what I needed to subdue our guest.

Monday night was still Monday night. There were no other candidates. I tried to hang on in the belief that there would be more appearances. There would no revelations.

If the magic of a Saturday held its interest, it would spill over to Sunday. But too much of a good thing would lead to a hideous collapse on Monday. Staring at the giant mirror in the employee washroom would bring anyone down. How could I ever face that mirror myself? Just for a moment. It did not show the soul. Just what *they* wanted us to see.

## TUESDAY: OBJECTS AS THEY ARE

We will save the philosophical debate for later on. On a Tuesday night, things were as they seemed to be. Bleak.

Tuesday was my night. It was too far from the last weekend to permit the hangover that had lasted too long. No squatters from the halcyon days. These were the pure party goers. They gave no mercy.

RIP knew that he could practice all his best moves tonight. His dances were all hip-driven. He would like to think differently. His motivation came from something more sinister. His tribe, his gang. But he was too often victim to that big ass-shaking beat. How could he liberate himself from this imprisonment. He already has a reputation among the club goers. But his image seemed to root him as the prisoner of the weekdays at the Cube. He could permanently desert his stoop. RIP needed theater. His day of the dead. He needed ghosts and resurrection. Instead, he only had “Bad Girls”

Maybe a Tuesday night incident could make RIP the center of attention. I knew that no one would be coming in here tonight. RIP would have to go out on the streets if expected any more of an adventure.

RIP danced for all of them. They knew that he was consistent. He would call out all the skeletons. There was no escape from the Cube. Closing hours and the dream remained with them all. But RIP had crossed over. He did night after night. He crossed that oneric line. He stood at the precipice of sheer frenzy.

It seemed somewhat comic for an observer. How could he risk so much without being melodramatic. He just pocketed his fifty bucks and went home. But RIP was stomping out that fundamental beat that raged in all of them. What they would not admit otherwise they never could return to their run of the mill daytimes.

–You really think that about everyone at the Cube.

–I know something about who they really are—who they want to be. I watch them suffer.

–You suffer because you’re really not part of them.

–I’m part of the night.

–For how long. Until we stop letting you in here. Until you’re money runs out. We already have one prophet.

–He can’t see how things really are.

–He sees that things are what they appear to be.

Was RIP my rival? I hated to mark off such simplistic alliances.

## WEDNESDAY: PART OF HISTORY

Each participant in that close-knit group was writing a novel of her experiences. Why bother? Live life as it happens. They were all in history because they wanted more from their story. They were already part of a cavalcade. The Saturdays were a pageant which reached back in time for a more memorable reference point. It framed their actions with a surrounding light that felt gratifying. It made everyone believe that they could not die without the legacy being emblazoned on the heavens.



It was quaint. It gave everyone this dose of fate that inspired their every night. Even if nothing was happening, the events came closer to cataclysm. Everyone aspired after the crash.

History left them one of two options. On one view, they could live at its most extreme and let the chronicle catch the outlines of their spirit. On the other perspective, they would tailor their experiences to fit in the most refined narrative. Both views existed simultaneously. Sometimes in the same person. Thea tried to hide any detail which didn't fit. Getting head in the dimly lit upstairs. Courtney let everyone watch and marvel. She was meant to be a slap in the face to the Set. That is why they accepted her. She did what they were so clumsy at. She lived to the fullest. The Cube had its reputation of hedonism. They lived to the edge only because they had so much difficulty crashing over.

In a sense, all histories were envious of this utter freedom granted to the Titans. They would not bend. They coveted self-destruction before they could even gate out of the gate. They were already broken.

On the face of it, RIP was the utter contradiction of the Titans, of HISTORY. He lived for his legacy. He cultivated his stage persona. Even though he was submerged in the same morass, this other persona pulled him through. That was why his vision could be much darker than the Titans. If the Titans lived for legacy, they could push themselves to their unique limit. They would have to save that bit for their explosion. Those who wanted something else stayed on the fringe. They often failed to notice what made all this drama so unparalleled.

–These freaks aren't anything special. They all suck cock and shit.  
Little did he know.

If Wednesday was Wednesday, why bother wasting it if no one was looking. Billy adjusted himself in the mirror, and just passed out. He was tuckered out. It was all over.

#### **THURSDAY: COMMEA**

On a special night, a cast of imposters would be given the right script. With their well-cast imitations, they would take over for the Titans. Would it be possible to hit the high notes. Or would the script even accommodate for all the variations of the night. Those things that even the Titans could not appreciate. Was there a richness in nights previous, or nights succeeding that was only wasted on these Titans. For the time that it was, they took themselves completely at printed value. This was their forever.

COMMEA

Who is this?

A competitor to Thea.

An EA after her time.

What she could never be. CM returned.

A goofy little dance. Cheap fashion. A loud mouth.

Who let her in?

Or these rumors to facilitate her dominance.

–You can pretend that none of this has happened. No Thea. No Titans. Just start from the thought that you are the first. The origin. The EA. All the rest is a bad dream. If there's enough momentum for your point of view, who will ever remember anything different. Right now, it seems like Thea, Billy, the Count are fixtures. In a few years, they'll go on to other things. They'll tear down these walls, and it's as if they have never happened. They have never happened. That's what history is. If there's no one around to carry it on, it never happened.

Commea felt brighter about her prospects. She would ignore the rivals. She would start from scratch. She would develop her own networks. She would have her philosophy. Everyone would repeat what she said, because it all came from Commea. That's how it would have to be.

When people wondered about Thea—who? The Cube—what the fuck—NONE OF IT WAS REAL!

We would have a new book to read with stories that originated from EA, came from EA, COMMEA.

–The name—no one would walk around with such a stupid name.

–It would no longer sound stupid if people repeated it. RIP, REST IN PEACE. That first sounded like so much gibberish.

–You're just imposing this silly story because you can't deal with what's happening around you.

Everyone is an EA. And if they don't fit, then you can ignore them.

–If she is not Thea, then she cannot radiate so much light—period.

It was Thursday night. Someone new walked in the door. There were a number of people out for a weekday. She watched the crowd. She danced for a while. They ignored her. No one talked to her. She left around 2AM. The crowd started to thin out around 2:30. Doors closed at 4.

### **FRIDAY: LIVE YEARS IN DAYS**

The Titans were a close-knit group. They needed to be. What gave them identity, what held them together was their allegiance. There were costumes and hair cuts. Poise and grace of movement. An essential zeal. Techniques that would not take long to learn. And an initiation that might take forever. That was all they had. That gave the group its identity, the living novel. At the same time, they lived within an extreme fear lest their secret be found out. That only made the guarded behaviors more extreme.

If a newcomer was patient and learned the lessons, would he be accepted into their midst. But the Titans were conscientious; surely their endeavors demanded their reward. It wasn't enough to shine on a Saturday night. The luminaries needed to know that their craft had not been wasted in their devotion to the darkness.

The Titans were not simple phantoms. Their hold was collective and they impressed this knit in the nightly rituals. It was not gossip that kept everyone in line. The reputation was based

on an ability to command attention. An awareness of the social set and its most recent eruptions. A desire to be provocative, even when the provocative might seem embarrassing. And a skill not to let that provocation threaten the group.

Even in their desire to be outgoing, the Titans remained discrete. Acceptance was most to be achieved in one short week. The newcomer would need to be able to contain his enthusiasm. Otherwise, he would misstep where the Titan held his ground. He would leap where the Titan would look and wait. He would collapse in public and risk his entry into this hallowed club.

How then could one pack all of life in a few short days? To feel the encroaching doom, the silence of the night, the initiate might verge on a breakdown. To be a Titan was to be marked by the night. To be haunted. But then to resolve the haunting.

–Have you seen *The Hunger* with David Bowie? If you'd seen it, you would understand.

Once the morbidity set in, the Titan would seek glamor. He was no ordinary vampire. That was why Thea was both typical and extraordinary. Her hunger rang deeper than the other Titans. She also seemed to keep it deeper within. That was why her dance seemed so deadly. Courtney was more engaging. Physical as physical. For that reason, she remained on the edge of the group. She had something that they wanted. But she would need to transform her independence if she was to be fully assimilated. She was almost a mascot, a performer whose excesses were tolerated since they only flattered the social set.

What could possibly threaten the Titans? What drove the need for new blood. Could they permanently feed on themselves. They had even learned to curb their appetites, so why would they ever have to be worried about losing their dominance.

–Billy, you are such a bitch.

–I'm not going to take any more for myself than you would.

–But that's the point. We don't even have enough for the both of us.

Could a newcomer knock them all from their perch? Was this what was held in store for the wayward crew? Didn't the hedonistic pursuit include a constant increase, and with this increase an actual destruction of the group's order.

–No one will depose me.

–That is not the problem. If your subjects desert you, you will no longer have a kingdom.

–Is there somewhere better that they want to be?

–You're the fairest of them all.

Thea thought that someone had called her name.

## **SATURDAY: SOMEONE I WANT TO MEET**

*THE TITANS WILL FACE MORE POTENT RIVALS.  
THEIR RIVALS ARE THEMSELVES.*

–I don't believe in the Titans.

–The Titans are among us. It is not a question of belief.

–Thea is here.

–The Titans will face more potent rivals.

–Like who?

–The new highness.

–Won't that just be replacing one Titan with another.

–She is seeking a new title.

–Empress.

–Impress.

–Who is left to impress?

–Those who hate the Titans.

–Other Titans.

–It will start as a revolt.

–That's who I want to meet—the leader.

–Sounds like Courtney.

–She is already a Titan.

–Then who is their new Messiah.

–Or new Anti-Messiah?

–More like a Nemesis.

–The Titan who would be the last.

–Or the first.

–If she is the first and last, she hasn't arrived yet.

–She will depose the Titans.

–I want to meet her.

–She will carry on Thea's principles, but they will bypass her material foundation.

–Pure image.

–Courtney.

–It all comes down to waiting. Waiting every night for someone new to come in. Not waiting for anything special. But just being here without anything to do. And when she comes, all that she will do is to tell them to play among themselves.

–Sound like a new DJ.

–Not not yet.

### **SUNDAY: THEA, DO YOU BELIEVE**

–I need a musical accompaniment to my questions.

–What is your first question?

–Thea, do you believe?

It was a meager Sunday. Someone had been picking through the pizza. There did not remain much food for these vagabonds. Maybe they could console themselves with drink and song.

If our talk of a new Thea was somewhat displacing the Thea of our story, then it was time to Thea to again reassert herself. But perhaps her disbelief was getting in the way.

–You don't believe?

–That's just a rumor.

#### ON DOUBT AND DOUBTS

It was a Sunday. What did the Titans believe in?

At any given moment, all the patrons of the Cube were not members of the Titans. Many of those had wandered in for a drink. A hope to talk to someone friendly. They had no idea who was Thea. There was none of the order on a Sunday to even give the inkling that Thea had ever been around.

–Did she leave that cup from last night? It looks like her lipstick?

–She is still with us.

–Do you believe her...

–To think that she can get away with that shit.

–She is just so traumatized by the least thing.

–It's sends everyone else in a panic.

–That is our Thea.

Did the person who ate the pizza believe in Thea. Did the belief linger while he digested the pizza.

–He threw up the pizza.

–Just puked it out.

–He didn't even wipe his mouth.

–Expected to be kissed.

–Wanted more.

–Left room for more.

–Who's feeding?

–You don't have to digest. The food just passes through.

–Where is Thea?

–She is in danger.

–Does she believe?

#### MONDAY: HAIRCUT AND PHILOSOPHY

A new haircut.

–They'll see the haircut before the face

–The geometry

–Does the face speak the haircut in the same way?

–Let me take a peek.

That's what we saw in Thea. A haircut that underlined the expressiveness of the face. The statue with its hands raised so the figure contemplated the heavens.

For everyone else at the Cube, they sought to attain the same serenity that was associated with Thea. They would go to the Count and ask him to give them that look.

–I have to find the cut for you that will do the same thing that Thea's cut does for her.

–I want to do more than that. I too want to be a goddess. More than my own type. I want to be cast without a mold. From the attractions of the heavens coming to situate themselves at my feet.

–What do you want me to do?

–To deify me.

The haircut was everything and nothing. No cut could equal the nonchalance of Thea or the zeal of Courtney. Those characteristics were part of their character. But the cutter had to make the receiver believe.

–Where do you want me to cut?

–Have you ever thought of cutting from the neck?

Was the question homicidal or suicidal.

–Give me those scissors.

Had the scissors ever been taken from the cutter.

–Who is going to solve the problem of executions.

–Off with her head.

–She is already off her head.

–Not Thea.

–Heavens no!

–And not Courtney.

–She would need more head to be off.

–Whatever that could mean?

–You've got the best haircut in here for a Monday.

–Is that the best haircut for a Monday, of a Monday in here?

–Maybe I should cut some more off?

–Or lick it off.

–Or lick it off my hand.

–I'm afraid of germs.

–What about kissing?

–A great haircut is a thing to admire.

–Is that a philosophy?

–A bad haircut is something to run from.

–Who said that?

–The Count of Verona.

–He has great hair.

–Better hair than the face.

–The face being Billy.  
 –Let me see the hair, the haircut of, and I would see more, have more, let me kiss more, kiss the hair, the lips of...

–Being Thea.  
 –Terrible.  
 And when she was bad, she was horrid.

## **TUESDAY: EA...THEA 2**

–What’s that monogrammed on your sweater?  
 –It was Thea. But the *th* got washed off.  
 –Washed off? Torn off.  
 –I found it at a thrift store.  
 –You’re telling me it said Thea. I might as well believe anything.  
 –It could have never said Courtney.  
 –How about Courtenay? With an E and an A.  
 –This is all too upsetting.

*It is evident how the focus has switched to Thea. The body of evidence that drew the initial story was derived from EA. If EA had made an appearance in Atlanta, would it have altered recent developments. Could EA hang out at the Cube, could she learn the techniques of the Titans, and would she be a center of attention.*

*EA is Thea; Thea is EA.*

We now considered that Thea was EA 2. But that would only make us interested in her due to her association with the original EA. That was the difference of the Cube: it had broken from its former connections.

*We will have to go back in time in order to go forward in time. That is the debt that we owe to EA.*

It was Tuesday. No one was here except the employees. Where was EA? Whoever walked in at that moment could remake history.

–I don’t feel like part of this story. I don’t feel like part of my life. It’s not even happening!

–You need to bring something back with you.  
 –What are you talking about?  
 –To know that you’ve been there.

Now we were too far along for EA to catch up. If she came in now, she’d have to come in as someone else.

–She will.  
 –Courtney?  
 –Just wait.

### WEDNESDAY: GORGEOUS BOYS, MORE COMPLEX LIES

- Don't say anything. Just sit there and look at me.
- Stare at you.
- Just look.
- How do you make yourself look the way that you do?
- I make other people think that it's important how I look.
- How do you look?
- I look great.
- That's part of you telling yourself.
- Or me being told.
- Or you telling others.
- What do you want me to say?
- Not much.

There was more going on than just looking.

- Do you want to touch me?
- That is very different than I wanting to touch you.
- Why?
- You brought it up. You invited me to think about it.
- Are you thinking about it?
- Is that what you would like?
- I'd like you to think about it.
- What are you thinking about?
- You want me to say touching you. That implies that your something to look at.
- Other people think that I am.
- I'm not other people.
- Do you want to touch me.
- Not really. I'm not like everybody here.
- Everybody here thinks that. That's why they're here. They all think that they're different. Some want to touch Thea. Some want to touch me. Suck me off and all. And some want to touch both of us.
- I'm here to watch.

- If you fade away, we'll miss you.
- I haven't come this far if I didn't think that it would make a difference.
- And it does.
- It doesn't. It's just a more complex lie.
- For more complex looks.
- That's what it is.
- Why are you looking at me like that?
- Why are you looking at me? You want to come home with me.



- Why are you looking me like that?
- Like what?
- I could fucking kill you for giving me that weird look.
- I turn you on.
- Fuck you!

### **THURSDAY: DAPHNE**

There were always boys who could come out on Thursday. Daphne had to work the next day. She came out anyway. She wanted to have fun. She didn't want to think about work, about cutting hair. She was friend's of Bileti.

If there wasn't a Cube, she might have been a Thea. Her long blonde hair with curls. But she was more vulnerable than Thea. She loved going to the Cube. Loved the music. But it was too much for her too do all the time. She'd rather watch a movie at home. If she couldn't find a guy to do it with her, so what. She'd stay in by herself. She knew the risk if she had to go out every night, if she just wanted to feel good all the time. She didn't let it bother her on Wednesday. But this Thursday, she was out.

–Do you have a story?

What could Daphne do in the short time that she had to make her feel as if she never had to go home. Without such liberty on her part, she would only feel this pressure as she tried to put everything into her night.

–I'm just going crazy!

Was it the craziness of the night to which she was surrendering. Or was it a deeper turmoil where her craziness was due to her inability to let go. This pressure just stayed with her.

–I'll have another drink.

But Daphne didn't want to show up to work buzzed. She knew how the fatigue would ring in her morning. And at the edges would seep out this deeper fear. That is what twirled her around the room. She tried to settle that feeling on the dance floor. The feeling was temporary and sent her back to the bar. She was feeling pleasant. She knew that if she stayed any longer, the night would bury her in its wave. If she just let go, and rode that tide, the effects would be cumulative. That same feeling would cut across her day around 3 PM.

Daphne sipped her drink slowly in the hope that it might delay the crisis. Crisis was not part of her night. She gave that to the Titans. She knew them. Many were in her profession. And they smiled at each other. She dabbled in their lifestyle. She admired their poetry. But she knew her risk, and she retreated from it. She didn't want to lose her nice apartment. Her dreams to escape it all. That was more tangible for her than the delights of the Cube.

Suspended in mid air, she could sense the power that gripped Thea night after night. Only to look at her, another patron could see that glow already coloring her face. He might linger hoping that she would look back. This would be the signal to approach her. Of course, Thea was moving deeper in her being. She could detect how she was radiating a power. This made her unapproachable. Where previously, she might have welcomed the attention, now she wanted nothing to do with the fellow. She waited for him to head for the door. She sought help in other familiar faces.

–Do you see that guy over there? He’s giving me the creeps. Pretend that we’re together.

Thea would never try this counter-strategy. She realized that it would only open her up to the other Titans and their meddling. The thunder clap either struck with all its ferocity. Or it was ignored. Passion made its way in the absurd cracks of the night. Or it was sent to the Arctic. There was no gradual seduction with the delights of the outside world.

Daphne realized that it was time to go.

### **FRIDAY: AFTER DESIRE CEASES TO HOLD**

For a while, I watched how Thea led Tommy around the club. I assumed that the two were in play together. Tommy had wonderful hair but lacked all the grace of a Titan. This would later be a critical issue, but for now was just an oddity among the various inconsistencies of the group.

–Who is that guy?

On a Friday night there were so many people in the club, it hardly left pause to wonder. One could only assume that the two of them were transacting their business out of the watchful eye of the scene. It also seemed to tarnish some of Thea’s magic. She needed someone, she needed something. This seemed to stall the rush of her dance. It also left the Titans in a bit of disarray as their social order was being challenged. Did this leave a vacuum in power. If Thea was distracted, did this leave Billy wider in the open. He tossed his hair, pranced around the club, and did everything that he could to pretend none of this had happened.

–None of this happened!

–What are you talking about?

–I want someone to rub me in a bathroom stall.

–Is that what the King wants.

The actions of Thea are quite of public knowledge. Did the events occur on this fateful Friday. Her long thin legs were his invitation. They almost ordered Tommy to do her bidding. For him it would be so easy to lift her skirt up, stretch her across the upstairs bar and do his duty. There would be no risk of the two of them being discovered. He would have his back to any observer. He would block the vantage point to Thea–this was the most obscured part of the Cube. He would be fully clothed. She would hardly change herself, as only her skirt was hiked up, and if caught, she could pull it back to its usual position.

On the other hand, the event begged for observation, none too innocent. A Titan could use the moment to depose Thea from her perch. She was almost set up by the event. Here was Tommy who recognized her magic, but he acted like none of the Titans. They would complete the transaction in a secret place. Of course, Thea would resist such a proposal. That would mean surrendering her desire as well as her sex.

Others might assume that the Tommy had obtained a deeper commitment of emotion from Thea. The chronology would follow the narrative of desire. The surrender to passion. The consolation of pooled resources. The wonderful days of ideal love. The realization of limitations, and the decay of the emotional connection. The immediate dissolution of the bonds. An interested observer would watch this story unfold in the anticipation that Thea would again be

free.

But this was another version predicated on Thea's brutality. She wanted Tommy around to pleasure. Anything more and that would imply that she enjoyed sex with a man. She wanted to maintain her absolute availability to other women. She was not enhancing her bisexuality. She was a lesbian who had entered into a simple contract that would be quickly dissolved at her discretion.

Tommy's desire made no sense in the world of the Titans. He simply had to transact his business and leave. His elfish desire insinuated its way into the group with a style that would upset the overall makeup of the union. But for the time being the union of the Titans held. Tommy got his fun. He could do what no one else could for the moment, share in the enthusiasm of Thea.

### **SATURDAY: ASHLEY**

*Is Ashley here? Who is Ashley?*

Ashley did not make the initial enumeration of the Titans. There was a real question if she had anything to do with the Titans at all. A question to be explored. If she was, Ashley, she was, she would be the Titan who would entice me personally into the group. Due to my position outside this circle, it seems hardly likely that a Titan would seek my company, especially at this stage. Who was Ashley?

Concept intact, we try to piece together the story.

Ashley was my Titan, like a patron saint. She would seem to be a wisp like Daphne. Not initially obvious, she would emerge after the group had impressed its dominant order. *Here comes Ash*. Her nickname *Ash* would capture the devotion to the morbid, things of the night. But she was entertained by this diversion. She was not a Titan, not given to the absurd depths of the night. Unlike Daphne, she needed the art. But that was her strength.

Ash wrote poetry. I admit that I saw none of it. It was probably little more than an extension of her journal entries. Since we have tracked the quotidian activities of the Titans, our chronicle shares some intimacy with Ashley's tract. But our task has been very different even at the time.

Given my relationship to the Titans, how could I discover the magic that propelled her. I could not ask any of the Titans. This would appear to be gossip about Ashley. This would definitely contradict our relationship.

This stage of the story assumes that the Titans do no gossip. That was all they did. If they did gossip, they would hardly share it with an outsider. If not an outsider, how could they even tell each other. So an outsider.

I would find out. I would be telling the story.

I told Ashley to write poetry.

—I've made up these characters, Titans. You are to become one of them. I also need you to keep a journal.

If Ashley, why the Cube?

–Let's go back to your place and invent the Titans.

And our invention would sustain itself longer than the actual Titans.

*Until DESIRE ceases to hold!*

### **SUNDAY: ALIENATION**

The Shark was at the door tonight. Saturday had been a blast. New characters roamed among the Titans and gave the evening a new promise. The songs were the same, but the dancers took them to new heights. I felt like I was part of something. It was evident that no one would be showing up this Sunday. A Saturday too good would produce the lull of Sunday.

–Did you see that new girl last night?

–Daphne.

–No. Someone completely new. She blended in with the Titans.

–The Titans?

–The regulars.

–I just saw the regulars and the outsiders. And then Tommy and his friends.

I knew for a fact that Tommy had not been out.

I wondered if Ashley was my illusion. I feared that my Titan would not reappear. I believed that the Titans were an actual group, and from this convenience, I had create my very own Titan—ridiculous—EA Titan.

Thea was gone for a while. I assumed that her deal with Tommy would be more permanent, and might destroy her position as a Titan—Amen.

What did Sunday have to offer? Considerations about Billy's unsuccessful reign. About the Count's support of this regime. I believed it more than they did. I hated it and what it stood for, but without the Imperial Set, there would be nothing.

The Imperials knew that they would need new blood soon. The group was a much looser confederation than initially assumed. In my focus, on Thea, there were players who were equally as vital who I had forgot. Others maintained a rich life outside the club and only had marginal contact with the main crew. There were equally important to setting the scene.

I imagined that I was at a tea party. I did not want to indulge in the tea, but I did want to be participant in the conversation. The chairs were too small for me. There were not enough of them.

–Sorry, old boy, I'll have to take your place.

–I was just looking for the palace.

–We're not staying at the Palace for now. This is our summer home.

–I just want to stay here until I can get it right.

I was not getting it right. Sunday night underlined that. If there was magic, why did no one else feel it with the same vibrancy that I did. I think that it was something that I saw in other cities. In Paris, in Chicago...in London.

A spark that would not go out. The Titans aspired after that same magic. But the records were not being played with the same intensity. Turn it up!

### **MONDAY: HERE: ANOTHER CHARACTER**

I want over the list of the Titans. For me, it was a desire to make sure that my narrative was exhaustive. It was not. Something was happening behind the scenes. I knew the Cube. But there were apartments on North Highland and a house on North Avenue where the story had a different form. Did I care?

I was imposing a Midtown order to the Cube. The role of the Titans would be temporary in my tale. But the Cube was their summer home, and they would not let go as Autumn made its approach.

The weekdays assured that something else was going on. For some, they would try to keep Saturday going by retreating to an after hours club. But they would not make it back for Sunday or Monday. Monday and Tuesday were part of my eternal night. Bring it on!

–I don't want to think of myself as one of your characters, much less a minor character. I buy the records. I know the dances. I love like all the rest. What is your problem. It is my story.

The Titans understood their role in imposing a text on the Cube. Learn the order or perish. To join up was to agree to abide by the book.

–Read it or die!

Billy, The Count, Chris, Joey, and Thea were fashioning the details of the work. Who actually conceived the novel? Who was the court writer? Christopher had enough of a distance from the group to serve that function. But his excitement prevented him from actually finding that critical distance to be its biographer.

–If you're going to tell our story, you need someone who is involved. Who knows the gossip. What is actually going on.

–But if the novel is primarily gossip, you never live the true spirit of the Titans to get beyond gossip. It has to be more than a palace chronicle.

Would it be possible to make the next person who walked through the door into the historian that the scene needed.

–I just came in here for a drink.

–We have more than drinks here.

–Do you have drugs?

–An ideology. A spirit. A way of life. A religion.

–I could go down the street for that.

What was going on down the street. Other bars with more immediate goals. To get some guy to take you to the park. Getting your dick sucked in the bathroom. Anonymous groping that

gave the participant the feeling that his sex was forever. That would allow him to change his leathers into a suit on Monday morning. How could one of those patrons understand the mythologies of the Cube.

### **TUESDAY: FIRST TIME YOU HEARD OF**

It was getting so confusing. There was a feeling that something was about to happen, a new Messiah for the scene. Then everyone was in search of a new character, someone who could embody the thoughts of the night but who could also engage everyone else. The philosopher King. Maybe the social order needed to be shaken up. A confrontation with World's End!

When was the first time that you heard of Thea?

–There is my dream. We are all dead. We have come back to life of a short time. And when the clock strikes 12, we will all have to return to the dead.

–It is nuclear destruction.

–Do you want the pill for now?

We all had been rushed to the Cube. Something important was going to happen. This is how the world would end. The BIG GUY would be a big face in the window looking at all us insects run around inside.

The doll house is crumbling.

–This is our last day alive.

If we could get that close to the end, could we figure out who we were—why the Cube held us together in such a close-knit arrangement.

–Who is that girl over there?

–That's Thea.

–Do you remember the first time that she ever came here?

I thought that the Shark could tell me the details of Thea's entry into the scene. Was there a time before the Titans? What was that like?

No one could imagine that time before. It just made them wonder. Were they beginning of an evolution, of us surpassing the night.

–There's something going on out there that has nothing to do with the Titans. When they realize that, they will all go crazy.

–Is that a prediction?

–Maybe.

–When did you first think of that?

–How would anyone have a chance to write the story. They have to work. Then they have to sleep, and then the Cube. That is all.

The story might be unwritten. But if someone could tell a story, it would have to start before Thea.

–Who’s that girl over there?  
 –That’s Thea.  
 THE TITANS: THEIR STORY

### **WEDNESDAY: TO DIE WITH YOU...PACT**

I could only watch. I was in a gallery of their lives. It was Wednesday night, and we were already too deep in this drama. Where did it all start, or did it start at the moment they felt the lights flash on and they hit the stage.

–Listen to the record.  
 –I don’t just listen to it. I am living it.  
 –It’s not enough to live it. You have to go to the next stage.  
 –What are you talking about?  
 –It’s not enough to live for the song. You have to die for it.

The Titans and beyond the Titans.

–If you come here, you have to give up your possessiveness.  
 –The Cube is a place of possession. It is possessed.  
 The players were living a slow death. But none of them would accelerate it with romantic illusion. There was no heartache among the Titans. They could only incite heartache in others.  
 –This would be the perfect place to die.  
 –Titans seek immortality. They give homage to their own divinity. You are in the heavens.  
 –That is not enough. There is a more powerful force that they know nothing about. Indeed, we wondered who could be so disruptive as to enter death into the equation.  
 –It’s not that this place is about death. But it is not about life either.

This equivocation would seem troubling to the budding poet. At the same time, the Cube could hardly sustain a visionary. So it would serve as a pretext. The reaction against all this consternation.

–If you love them, how can you love me?  
 Who would raise the ante with such a challenge. Was there love enough to frame such a leap,

–I have traveled to another world in my dreams. I am much happier there.  
 –But it’s not real.  
 –No, here is the chill. When I am lucid, things that happen in my dreams are real. We can cross over together. If you are ready. There is no death there. Only life everlasting.  
 He could feel himself pulled into her dreams. She was a sorceress sent to fool him into a permanent mistake. What if she went first and came back to reassure him. He would have to have dreams as vivid as hers. Would that ever be possible?  
 –Kiss me.

Any excuse for physical contact. To render the dream real. To wake up from the dream.  
 –There is only one way out of here. Otherwise, the Cube is just inescapable. It will follow you around everywhere.

#### **THURSDAY: GET TO KNOW HER FRIENDS**

If I became friends of hers, would she be my friend. I enlisted this very clever strategy to work my ways into the Titans. They may not have been a friendly lot. But they needed to talk. So they had developed friends who hung at the edge of their circle. Those friends were always checking themselves against the standards set by the Imperial Set. They would need ego boosting. I was available to help them in their weakness.

It was one thing to have a plan. Something quite different to figure out how to effect it. I felt speechless in the Cube. And the music was so loud that it seemed inevitable that nothing would ever be accomplished.

June or Anne seemed the easiest to approach, but they were so on the periphery. Christina had already submitted to the transformation. She was like an initiated vampire. She had already succumbed. Who could help?

David had recently moved to Atlanta. On my first visits to the city, Bileti had been house sitting. He let me stay with him. This beat having to sleep in my car which had been one option. We wanted to bring our Midwest story to life in Atlanta. But we hardly had the means to burst through the Imperial Set. Could they have appreciated Gina brash independence. I wanted to share my research on EA with Bileti. He had his own preoccupations.

We continued to explore other options outside of the Cube. After a particularly crazy night, Bileti proceeded to share his driving skills.

–These are things that can't be accomplished in three-dimensional space.

He felt in control. He was turning a gravel parking lot into a figure-eight race track. He swung his classic orange BMW around the lot. I felt my body torn apart by the forces to which I was submitting. I wanted to get out of the car. I wanted this to stop. It was completely overboard. But also welcome.

For the passenger, there was a sense of an imminent crash against one of the concrete wall. The driver only felt the ground and the turns of the wheel. He felt in control.

From that time on, I wondered if Bileti would again attempt his maneuver when he took me driving.

–If I could just transplant the dynamics of our old scene. I've tried to get a few other people to come down here.

–I'm not going to be here much longer myself. You're going to have to make your way.

–But there are so many things that I want to share with everyone. Things too tricky to explain.



–No one here is going to understand EA. They have their own heroes. You’ve said it yourself. EA could never survive with the Titans.

–At the same time, none of the Titans could survive as EA.

I wish Bileti’s logic could transmit to his driving. We were thinking back to our days of Party Search. Moving backwards while Atlanta was moving ahead. In my mind, I was being spun around a dirt track. Crashing into the walls of my history. Losing my grip on Atlanta.

–You know Daphne,

–She’s talked about a few people in the scene.

Bileti didn’t want to pursue his connection to Daphne.

–She expects too much. We don’t really see eye to eye. She tries. But she is not an artist.

I thought about one of Francine’s entertainments. She sat in a car with friend while they both smoked dope. He would let the car roll down an incline and see how far it moved until it stopped.

–It’s fun!

The experimenters obviously need their altered states to mediate such intense boredom. Bileti wanted to find out how to fill those moments.

How long would Bileti be there to help me fill in my story?

Tommy’s flagrant acts on Thea might have given the impression that there was more to their affairs than a simple transaction. She at least hung off him to give the impression that there was something going on. A touch of that moon dog stare. It wouldn’t last for long. But Thea seemed to be stating a case. When Courtney made her play for Tommy, this seemed to disrupt the state of affairs. The Titans were in a tizzy. What the hell was Courtney doing? Why was she meddling? Thea had clearly set her up. She cared little for this connection with Tommy. It was mere convenience. But it was the convenience that Courtney flaunted. Both girls knew of their predominant attractions to women. Therefore, more than ever, Tommy could be a simple object of rivalry. His role was merely to give pleasure to the two vixens. And he was ready to oblige. What did he have to lose? They’d all want to finish it off with a little something for the boy.

So the major rivalry was written across the Cube and in all other places that the Titans claimed as their own. Since none of the three had been seen for days, this added to the suspense. There was one rumor that Courtney in a fit had killed both her hoped-for lover and her dreaded rival.

Tommy’s friends were amused although they hardly made a splash at the Cube. This was to be an all-out battle among the Titans. RIP admired Courtney’s flash. Billy thought that Thea was his protégé. The Count knew both and was ready to back whomever would emerge victorious from the challenge.

Tommy would have to give his services over to female pleasure, but what better fortune for a young male, to be fought over by the two stars of the realm.

Tommy's ripped tennis shoes were hardly a match for the elaborate boots of the Titans. And as long as they reigned, he would stay on the periphery. He wanted to be a harbinger of a change. At best, he was caught up in the match between the two harpies.

–What did you call me?

The venom flowed thick and would not thin until blood was drawn.

Even if none of the three were to be seen, their enmity was in constant evidence at the Cube. RIP seemed sullen. Billy was in a panic. The Count saw it all as an opportunity. If Thea fell from grace, no other Titan could replace her. So he naturally saw the battle as an opportunity. If Thea remained in power, his constancy would be rewarded. If she lost in her battle, Courtney would need his advice. Billy was worried. He saw the Count as already encroaching.

–Send the little fuck home to look in the mirror.

–He has such beautiful clothes at his place.

–I'd take him on.

–As would I...

–Shut up you little twits.

### **I had the map of the Cube and critical time to explore its form**

**FRIDAY: COME WITH US AND SEE HIM**

**SATURDAY: FLIER SHOT DOWN**

**SUNDAY: THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY**

**MONDAY: WHISPER CRUCIAL**

**TUESDAY: CONTEMPLATES YELLOW**

**WEDNESDAY: AGENTS OF HISTORY/ ANGELS OF DEATH**

**THURSDAY: WAIT IN THIS ROOM**

**FRIDAY: THE LAW/OUTSIDE**

**SATURDAY VIOLENCE: RANDOM VIOLENCE**

**SUNDAY: COUNTING THE SKELETONS**

**MONDAY: STARS AND RADIATION**

**TUESDAY: ARRESTED FOR PASSING POLITICAL LITERATURE**

**WEDNESDAY: THE BIARRITZ**

**THURSDAY: THE GRUESOME PART**

**FRIDAY: WAKE UP CALL**

**SATURDAY : LINDA: THE FUN'S OVER**

**SUNDAY: A REASON TO ALL THIS**

**MONDAY: DEADLY IN THE SUPERMARKET**

**TUESDAY: KILLING CLOTHES**

**WEDNESDAY: TO DIE WITH YOU...PACT**  
**THURSDAY: THE REAL QUEEN**  
**FRIDAY: YOU EXTERMINATE THEM**  
**SATURDAY: KNIFE THREAT**  
**SUNDAY: I DISCOVER HER**  
**MONDAY: ABSTRACT DESIRE**  
**TUESDAY: HEART OUT OF METAL**  
**WEDNESDAY: FOLLOWS HIM OUT TO HIS CAR**  
**THURSDAY: LOSS OF TIME**  
**FRIDAY: ANTHEA'S THEA MASK**  
**SATURDAY: I'M NOT WORRIED/ IT'S NOT HAPPENING TO ME**  
**SUNDAY: SUCH A TRAMP**  
**MONDAY: POWER TO MEDIATE**  
**TUESDAY: OBJECTS AS THEY ARE**  
**THURSDAY: COMMEA**  
**FRIDAY: LIVE YEARS IN DAYS**  
**SATURDAY: SOMEONE I WANT TO MEET**  
**SUNDAY: THEA, DO YOU BELIEVE**  
**MONDAY: HAIRCUT AND PHILOSOPHY**  
**TUESDAY: EA...THEA 2**  
**WEDNESDAY: GORGEOUS BOYS, MORE COMPLEX LIES**  
**THURSDAY: DAPHNE**  
**FRIDAY: AFTER DESIRE CEASES TO HOLD**  
**SATURDAY: ASHLEY**  
**SUNDAY: ALIENATION**  
**MONDAY: HERE: ANOTHER CHARACTER**  
**TUESDAY: FIRST TIME YOU HEARD OF**  
**WEDNESDAY: TO DIE WITH YOU...PACT**  
**THURSDAY: GET TO KNOW HER FRIENDS**

ROOM	
Outside	
Car	
Supermarket	
Store	
Biarritz	

--	--

heart	
haircut	

CRUCIAL  
 <THE BODY ζ>

HER  
 ANOTHER  
 CHARACTER

FIRST  
 TIME/HEARD

tramp  
 someone/meet

Daphne	HER
--------	-----

Comme a	
Ashley	
Linda	friends
Anthea	
Thea	QUEEN

mask  
<THE BODY> β  
EA

days

### SKELETONS

wake-up

ABSTRACT DESIRE

STARS

TIME  
not worried

*believe*

alienation	knife	exterminate
gruesome	shot	violence
desire		
politics	yellow	
mediate		
history	objects	death pact

CRIME

REASON

To walk the map would mean to go back to a smaller radius, the determination of EA, and figure out what that meant. The Cube was already too overwhelming. It seemed like centuries before I could walk out of cocoon. But I already had been flying elsewhere, and I wanted to make it back to flight.

I remember the first night that I went to the Cube. I didn't even live in Atlanta. I'd been told about it by a club buddy. The neighborhood seemed deserted. A touch of mystery.


Inside, I wasn't all that impressed by this retro disco feel. But the light. I wanted the light, all that light. After closing, I got in my car and followed some of the patrons as they drove in a line of cars out to another location, an after hours club. But I took a look at the place and drove on.

And when I first moved here, I had a connection for a apartment. It was just blocks from the Cube. I walked out of my door, and looked over a hill at the skyline then headed down to the Cube. It would be the same, night after night.

To make the case for Cruciality was to put on a face that was not my own, to take a name that was not my own. Ask David. Ask W.D. What about my mysterious birth, how do we resolve the facts?

I entered the Cube with my inimitable smile.

*I take on the smile of Crucial.*

	[L]	<b>.S.</b>
 <b>CRUCIALITY</b>	We start the ERA. I had been prodded to start my own band. We needed a concept so that we would not give in to the mythology of the rock star.	You have to wear the mask to contradict the mask.
	<b>SEXUAL DISCREPANCY.</b> I break against my identity. I become something that I am not. It is always against me, and I add myself against that. It is never identical. It is never a sexual identity.	The band is becoming something different than you want. It has a sexual identity that contradicts CRUCIALITY.

	[F]	⊕	<u>Y</u>
<b>.S.</b>	Even in wearing the mask, you have to find that form of allegiance to your <b>CRUCIALITY</b> .	You play along. You seek respectability for its rewards. If it is a mask, then you can mold it to fit the circumstance.	The mask is only a pretext. You are pushing beyond the mask at each moment. Pain. Breathlessness. <b>INTENSITY!</b>

*It is provocative–CRUCIALITY–so it is not always cool. Sometimes it seems oppressive. Stop it. But you have to keep being CRUCIAL even when you are expected to stop. Just waiting around for something to happen way past time.*

–Isn't it time to go.

–Oh, is it?

–We move to Atlanta, and we can blend in. We just wear our suits all the time.

–They have more original designers.

–I have this idea for a yellow linen suit with a purple shirt.

–It sounds ridiculous.

## NETWORK OF SITUATIONS/ RELATIONS OF ORDER

RELATIONS		
	▣	
	▣ finitude	⌘
anarchistic–thrown moment	▣	
	▣ cognitive	
	▣ text	
moment of play as artifice	▣ artifice	
	▣ <i>techne</i> , technical	[F]
	▣ dance	μ
	▣ image	

	<input type="checkbox"/> music	$\theta$
moment of intensity	<input type="checkbox"/>	$\underline{Y}$
moment of cool	<input type="checkbox"/> T test	
political moment	<input type="checkbox"/> politics	$\eta$
moment of sexual politics	<input type="checkbox"/> sexual discrepancy	[L]
moment of Crucial	<input type="checkbox"/> celebrity	$\mathcal{C}$
moment of rule and respectability	<input type="checkbox"/>	$\oplus$
	<input type="checkbox"/> punctuated	
moment of moments		
$n$ $\sum_{i=0}^n 2^i$		
<b>THE NETWORK</b>		

- RESISTANCE            **recalcitrance**
- protection
- new series of over loads
- finitude

–What is this gibberish?  
–It’s the key to Cruciality, the facets, all of that.  
–More bull shit!  
–It explains it all.  
–To you not me

computed

held against calculation

℄	[L]	[F]
θ	.S.	⊕
μ	γ	<u>Y</u>

–Cruciality assumes this network. And then you try to make it work in the map of the Cube. It’s two different things. The map is not going to work.

–I am reduced to silence.

–Crucial, when you’re talking to someone, who is that?

–You.

–I’m not here.

–I’m talking to Bileti.

–He moved away.

**PART C: In which Courtney complains about her treatment in the story and tries to self-determine the point of view by claiming a special relationship with EA.**

I went out tonight. I drove. The clubs seemed dead. I didn’t go inside. I drove down a narrow street with one side lined with parked cars. A cab backed up a half a block to let me pass. I flashed my lights at him to thank him. I never talked to anyone tonight. But I know that there is still life–SOMEWHERE!

While Courtney complained about her treatment and was preoccupied with trying to convince the text, Thea nonchalantly walked in and up turns the point of view

**PART C: In which Courtney appeals to the Count for a decision regarding the tacit conspiracy between Thea and Crucial to prevent her from telling her story.**

**PART C: In which Tommy elaborates the manifesto [CENSORED] . . .**

**This part will have to wait!**

**JACK’S STORY:** He squawked like a chicken giving birth. And then he lay an egg.

Jack was all physical. The smells, the animal noises. He was all about before CRUCIALITY. A spit on the collective floor. Walking around on all floors trying to get back to



his origins.

Jack invited me on a journey.

–It’s free.

And it started like that in a bad way.

–We can’t go home until something happens.

But Jack could seldom make things happen. His noises were funny. But also an embarrassment.

–Let’s go on adventure.

–You’re on your own now. I showed you where to go. You have to go there on your own.

He taught me tricks. We held up signs for CRUCIALITY. Hail CRUCIALITY. It is all here.

What year was that?

–You needed to have been someone, if you’re going to be someone.

–I’m CRUCIAL.

–But who are you? Why do you come here?

–I’m just hanging out.

## ASHLEY’S STORY

*We are going to try to begin again.*

–How did you get in here?

–We picked the lock.

–What about the alarm.

–It wasn’t on. I don’t even know if there is an alarm. We have to get to the center. The core.

Courtney has taken over the story for this brief section,

*For Ashley’s story, she would have to take the place of Thea. That would assume that we are putting the whole EA thing in check. Thea is not EA. Is there a corresponding character for Ashley. She does not need another character as she is the character. If you change the core, then everything is not wired for EA.*

*Since this is Courtney’s novel, Ashley is simply a rendition of Courtney.*

–Why would we even need Ashley?

–A stand in for Courtney.

–Is Courtney attracted to her double?

–Of course.

*We have the same story. Ashley stands in for Courtney and does not want to abandon her position. But the lights have been adjusted for Courtney.*

*What if Lee wants to ask Ashley out to the car?*

*She would go without hesitation. Except she is standing in for Courtney.*

*–What do you have to offer me?*

*–I have an invitation and a promise.*

*–I have everything I need in here.*

*We still have the knife attack. It is motivated. Ashley meets this street hustler Lee. She gets him to come out to her car. He's a street hustler; he doesn't have a car. He does his work in other men's cars. Rich men with luxury cars.*

*–Don't stain my seats. I don't want my wife asking questions.*

*You have enough money, and people start asking questions.*

*I seems like random violence. But the victim is not chosen randomly. She is chosen for her body.*

*–I want to damage to her body.*

*We can fix the face.*

*–There has been too much damage.*

*The look, the grimace. Everyone will practice that.*

*Ashley doesn't have much of a history. Just this one night. And she saw a girl, Courtney. She was jealous. Some guy showed attention to Courtney, not Ashley.*

*–I'm leaving. You're all faggots in here.*

*–You noticed, bitch!*

*Ashley wants something.*

*What Ashley wants, Courtney doesn't get, because Courtney doesn't want it. She's already got it.*

*–Everyone wants Courtney.*

*–See the story is already changing.*

*–Who's the girl with Courtney?*

*–Someone that she's going to take care of tonight. It's her turn to be with a girl tonight.*

*When will it be my turn?*

*Ashley is the girl who cannot wait for her turn.*

*You're going to have to wait for paradise.*

*THE PARADISE.*

*If you get to know her friends, you can get closer to her. Make her think that you're her*

*friend. Just so that you can hurt her bad.*

*–One of my friends betrayed me.*

*–Which one?*

*–Some new girl. Ashley.*

*–Did you sleep with her.*

*–We did some things. She thought that she was someone special.*

*–Did you put her in her place?*

## **THE PARADISE**

*–You can feel yourself pushing up against it. Or just see it.*

*–I’ve seen stairs that lead to the Paradise. I can’t reach the top. I don’t have the energy.*

*–You have to save yourself.*

*–If I save myself, I can’t burst through at all. I need to expend as much energy as I have to break on through.*

All that I could think about was Thea. I could feel myself becoming her. Our bones melded. We were becoming one.

*–Thea, why do you feel such pain, such suffering.*

As Thea, I could not ask to be held. Held was to be held away.

Thea needed me to express her division.

Outside, I was the inside of THEA.

*EA goes public. Andre announced today that he was making EA into a public offering. Shares are to be traded in the new company. It is an excellent investment.*

*–Do me a favor. Do for him, what he will do for you.*

*I drive over to the grocery store for some orange juice. I am thirsty after a long night of dancing. I need to get outside of myself.*

*I will need to break this place with another place. That is how I will open the PARADISE.*

*Do for me what you did for him.*

*We need another place, another character.*

*THE PARADISE*

*you will cross over*

*you have already crossed over...*

**THE CUBE!**

*You need to get on with the Thea adventure. What has changed? What new do you have to report.*

–You’re not cool until you drink this.

–What is it?

–Poison. Of course, it’s poison.

–I’m saving that.

Saved for the Paradise.

–It is coming.

## THE FICTION

The aggregate of intensities suggested a PARADISE. I was as if time was precious. We surrounded the moment with a silence. It was our ecstasy.

But the Paradise was not portable. It isolated us in a few local gestures. Dancing against geometry. Almost falling. Explosive. There was nowhere to go. Except Atlanta. From the Paradise, we had a character. We needed a biography. That is why the FICTION was created. To blend in, but to not be a part of. To be the monster of the story. Since we were not monstrous, we had to play the mask. The focus shifted to Thea. It was now her story, and the other characters by reference to Thea.

–Thea is too self-centered to be interesting.

–She is interesting because her self is in the center. If you don’t see that, you don’t get it.

## THE MIRACLE

*Once Thea’s purpose had been detailed, the fiction required her to have any means at her disposal to meet her ends. This was the creation of the supernatural component of the story. Only when she explored the origin of her powers did we get closer to the mystery.*

M<sup>0</sup>

Before I could have imagined being burned up with my desire. I had thought about Francine this way—so overwhelmed—anticipating the kiss. Now, I could only be touched by this over-reaching consciousness. I was knocked down, degraded.

## RESPECTABILITY

Attention to form and detail. Classic.

**THROWN, ANARCHISTIC****REPREHENSIBLE**

Each structure has its corresponding event.

I, A, δ IMAGE

ā program

**AUDRA**

It was a vague image, but it slowly assumed a more distinct form. She had also dominated these nights. No Courtney nor Thea, she let more important pursuits fill her day time. So her devotion to the night was limited. But Audra was still a critical player among the Imperial Set. To approach her would be so much easier than Thea or Courtney. But her risk was so much less. She was not immersed in the night. So part of her could not understand at all. This was the more conservative side of the Royals. They could not let loyalties to image be threatened by the electricity of the night. They were rooted in the day as this gave magic to that image. It was just that because it was sustained by something else. Fashion, easy money, the currency of light.

Her look was classic, almost Continental. Enough to pique the interest of the night, not too much to devastate. Her make up was equally tasteful.

**TASTE AND TOUCH!**

–Can you taste that?

–I think that I can. Cinnamon.

She rested at the edge of the bar as it adjoined the dance floor. Just close enough that she felt the brush of the dancers.

–Do you want to come home with me, Audra.

–We live together.

They didn't. That was far as the interaction would go. But she was accelerated tonight (ecstasy (?)). She kept her secrets. She kissed some unknown in the bathroom. Then she departed early to consoler herself at home. Another day of work—or decorating her apartment. Something would preoccupy. Watching a tree grow.

*She is reaching through glass. She is trying to escape.*

She woke up that morning to a shower of light. Perhaps, she should have been up earlier. She embraced the sun. What infernal union had she contemplated in her dreams?

**THEA**

*She is beyond human. She is bird-like.*

*Thea reaches to the sky so that she can soar. This is her flight. I want to embrace her.*

*To join her.*

The night pushed down with its intense weight. I wanted to take off. The light of the Cube nearly knocked me down. She had become completely transparent and blended with the light. Just a form within the burning flash.

Thea.

–She’s making a film about her life.

An assumption into a higher light. Her encounter with the sun.

–In the first scene I want her to look at the camera and smile.

The film was overexposed by too much light..

–I can hardly see her, there is too much light. We need to adjust.

–You need to shield your eyes.

You want to see but cannot.

THEY ARE WHO THEY ARE BECAUSE THEY’RE HERE. THEY ARE NOT PRETTY. THEY DEFINE BEAUTY

–What have we learned today?

–We have learned how exhausting a day of taking stage directions can be. It’s tough posing for the camera all day.

Thea considered her new career. It was a matter of directing her dreams.

*Venus talks to Thea: breath in breath*

We wondered about Thea’s origins. Competing stories crowded out each other and were mixed with rumor. What was the way to decide among these competing versions.

Thea looked to the heavens for intervention.

–It is no coincidence that you wonder who you are. You are a mix of air and fire. You are light and turbulence. You proceed from another state of being.

–Don’t we all.

–Your passion is special. While others turn towards the ground, you are drawn to the light.

Thea felt calmed by the news. She needed to know more to calm her curiosity,

–You can feel my breath inside you. Warm and original. That is the source of your birth. You have arrived from a gentle breeze, a southern breeze, warm and moist. You seek to return to the same.

Not only did Thea understand where she began, she has a clearer sense of mission. No wonder the clarity of light gave her a transcendent sense. She was already being welcomed by this other worldly state of BEING. When she lost her connection to her well, how could she reestablish its flow.

–You are passionate. But don’t let yourself be ruled by passion. You are already in my

light. If you lose yourself, you will lose that radiance.

Thea felt cautioned by the advice. She needed to know how to deal with her rivals.

–You are from on high. You have no rivals. Only if you lose yourself in the filth and garbage of your existence will you lose your divinity.

She could not believe her ears. She also thought that the blessing seemed so simple. How could things go wrong?

An eavesdropping disbeliever might feel disgusted by Thea's legacy. It gave more ammunition to the Imperial Set. Already they were cocky. How could anyone yield to this divine right of Thea?

Thea felt emboldened in her battles with Courtney. She had faced her mirror and had come out all the more powerful. What stood in her way.

After a restful night, she prepared for more encounters with the camera. It would be a battle as she now realized how the camera could rob her of the eternal soul that she had been granted.

–There is a ghost that exists in the celluloid.

Almost to conquer her spirit, she had a director telling her to walk this way or give the right profile to the camera. Her body was being cut up before her eyes. She just wanted to feel whole again.

She returned to her encounter with Venus.

–Can you feel my breath in yours.

She gave way to a restful sleep.

–Do you remember me from high school?

–She ignored her questioner. She had no history. She was whoever they told her she was.

–You are precious.

For those who wanted to be goddesses. There was no chance. The tolerance for worship among the Imperial Set was limited. If Thea was to lay her claim, then she would allow few rivals. Even Courtney was on thin ground.

–I'm a star now. What does the girl think that she's going to do. Sabotage my career.

Everyone around Thea was eager to play to advance her celebrity. It only made them believe that they were part of something. For the time being they were.

–I know all the stories about me. That I'm a bitch. That I'm fucked up all the time. That I'm loose. Well, fuck you all.

Thea cast a pout for the camera. It pouted back. Time would never be kinder on her again.

–You can never be too thin.

–Where have we heard that before?

–It's true. If I have to take pills to starve myself, I will.

She licked her lips, for the fans, for the camera, for herself. *She licked her lips.*

–Do that again.

You could feel her tender lips touch yours. You wanted her. She owned the world.

–Is she looking at me?

–Of course she is. Just don't ask her for anything more.

A screen seemed to separate me from her and her friends. The camera only made that distance seem greater than ever.

The light was way too potent here.

–It's not for the camera. It's more like a physics experiment. They're trying to take her soul and project it in the future.

Her hangers on had the same hopes.

–Let them hope.

Billy was nowhere to be seen.

All this commotion was interfering with my work. I had a story to tell. I had a mission to explore my fiction. Thea was creating her own novel that was competing with my ability to records these minute details. How could I slow down this new history.

–We are not sentimental about our past because we have no past.

–Didn't we play together at the park?

Thea ignored her questioner.

I prepared questions for her friends. I thought about my opportunities. I was captivated by the silence. There was nothing that I could say.

### ***WHO'S HOT/WHO'S NOT***

For a time that it mattered. Thea was already beyond that. She seemed to be a model for everyone that came afterwards. Each little club girl thought that she could conquer the world of fashion. More than that, the club boys sought a more permanent fiction not given to the shifts in emotion like Thea.

–We are not children of the moon.

Thea could cast her detractors into oblivion.

–If you're version of hot is fucking in public, then you miserable urchins can go back to the whole where you crawled out of.

Her venom seemed focused. What could they do that Thea couldn't. She was in conspiracy with the night. The tides shifted time even inland, and she could feel these minute changes. And they wondered what was wrong. Nausea and headaches. Her punishment for them.

–What is Thea doing to me.

Of course, Courtney had her own tricks for Thea. A goddess might lose efficacy when she went one on one with a sprite.

I needed to review my devotion to Thea. I wanted my health.



## **CURIOSITY**

A child of the night. It was not possible to ignore her. If not ignorance, then we cursed her—Thea—child of the damned.

She had rolled up her history and rendered it to oblivion as she extended her eternity night to night. It was a neutralization of desire. A fix. Numb just watching. Not a kiss. You were kissed by the light. That was sufficient. It could only upset the daytime for her audience. At first, it was the music and the appeal of the night style. All of that was Thea.

## **SELF-DOUBT**

Thea was a goddess. Next to her, mortals were condemned to a putrid darkness. The mediocrity of the Cube became apparent next to her radiance. At the same time, the lights did nothing but testify to her brilliance. That's why everything seemed so faded on my first visit. Nothing existed in and of itself. It was all for her.

Against her formidable nature, I wondered about my own craft. She barely needed a supplement for her art. It was enough to be Thea. She didn't need my fiction to enhance her appeal.

I hated the direction of the Imperial Set. They could never push the night beyond its limits. Its limits were all chemical for them. I felt like an addition to Thea's splendor. But they were only a surplus to the night's wonder.

## **SEARCH FOR APPROVAL**

I still wonder if Thea noticed my observance. If she was only partially aware of her own nature, then my marking was lost to her. She knew that she had fans, and I only blended in the crowd. If I said nothing to her, what would distinguish my devotion. More than ever, I wanted to share my realization. The more that I understood, the harder it was to communicate all this to her. She would think me crazy for bestowing this divine nature on her. But she knew. I could tell that she knew. Even as she walked, she seemed to float. The Cube was her meadow. There were flowers around her. In the breeze, they spread their poison.

—You're not even working. You're spending all your time looking at this stupid little girl.

—I'm waiting for the event. It will all fall into place.

I knew that I needed Thea's blessing for my vocation. It was all getting ugly. I need to get out of here.

## **DEPRESSION**

As long as Thea seemed to have this charm, I was paralyzed. I couldn't work. I took special comfort from those nights when she didn't show up. This made me think that the magic had nothing whatsoever to do with her. It did not.

## DEEP DEPRESSION

I needed a breakthrough. Something to get me closer to the Imperial Set. I had hit an impasse. I was devoted to its magic. I knew that I had nothing to do with its reality. They went off to the apartments to do drugs. I went home and tried to sleep. Morning would be too much. I was still trying to balance an equation. Their math was beyond me. Not just the repetition from night to night. They had pushed the equation to a new balance. I couldn't hold up my side of the bargain.

## THE MUSIC

I perfected my dance moves. I had an understanding that they seemed to lack with their odd flourishes. In dance, I shed my paralysis. I turned. I contorted and released. I beckoned the ground and then spun out of my precariousness. Their drugs would not allow them the liberty that I attained. It was my night.

## SELF-AWARENESS

I started to regain my pose. It had been a long summer. Its heat absorbed me even in September. I was losing track of time. I needed to start working.

The lights of the set were giving Thea terrible flashbacks. She was remembering details that had nothing to do with her experience. A suburban Georgia high school. The nights of sneaking out to the downtown clubs. Domineering parents. Ridicule. Where was this coming from?

–This isn't part of the script. I'm not going to play such a silly role.

–You're sort of a Joan of Arc.

She smiled when she heard this description. She needed to learn how to deal with her destiny.

The flashbacks continued. She was losing her grace. She couldn't dance. All her moves were clumsy. What was the source of this new awkwardness.

–Often, we become the opposite of what we really are.

## SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

–Often when we face our feelings of inadequacy, we turn inward. We start to hear our voice.

For Thea, she was becoming the star of her universe. How could she radiate that light for everyone else. This is the critical element in attaining an identity. She needed to influence those around her.

## FLATTERY AND BLINDNESS BEFORE APPROVAL

Thea's path was becoming more perilous.  
*I was becoming Thea!*

Once she realized that all eyes were on her, she felt a secret power. She could manipulate her admirers. She fell victim to their flattery. She felt immune from criticism. Her least whims seemed occasion for another fan to step out of the shadows. The fan could crown her achievement from the least attention from Thea. Thea gave nothing from herself and soaked up all this attention. There was no safety as she just fell into this hole of flattery.

Thea's blindness was complete. Too much light. She saw everything, but she lost focus. She could not concentrate on any one thing.

–I'm not getting flighty, am I?

–Do you have to ask?

–I just wondered. Oh well.

What could stop the Thea express?

## THE AWAKENING

From awareness to consciousness everywhere, Thea was emerging for her rightful destiny.

Lights. Camera. Stars.

–Thea, you don't know how to suffer for the camera. You don't have a life. You have no reference points. You can't go into yourself to find new emotions.

She felt insulted by the director. She needed to create a life that she could use as her reference point.

*I need to rescue Thea.*

Two charmless girls looked on from the side of the dance floor. They dipped their feet in the water. One swayed her hips. The other yawned.

–You really don't have to stay here if you don't want to.

–Are you making fun of us?

–We can't help how we are born.

Thea thought back to the first time that she dyed her hair. She separated herself from the pack that had ravenously made fun of her.

–I look great now.

Now she lived in a world so separate from these girls on the sideline.

–Is that what this place is all about? You just laugh at us.

If it was like that, then Thea was getting the last laugh. She turned her head to embrace the camera.

–This has been going on long enough.

## SHAME

To attain this acclaim brought with it a fear of losing her edge. Thea knew how feeble was her grip on this reality. A wrong snap, bad lighting, a bad day and her rivals would feel that it was their moment to depose her. She heard conversations in the bathroom. She knew what was going on. A plot against.

Worse she took it to heart,

How could the Titan feel shame? She had no history. Did shame try to invent a history for her that didn't exist. Or remind her of the importance of something that had trivial influence. How could she change it at this moment.

## HIDING

On the weekdays, we seldom saw Thea. This gave the impression that she was gathering up her resources for the weekends and her major appearances.

–Tell them that I am on set!

She kept hiding herself in the light. Doing things in the light that she could never get away with in darkness.

## DENIAL

Thea's bitterness was taking control. As if this was the bitterness of her history that was rearing its ugly head. Only now Thea was the persecutor. Was the only reason that she adopted this tact was to make up for her offenses of the past.

–Who is creating this story for me?

She was learning to live her life in a night. Taking on crisis and resolving it all before dawn. This would be better than love. She would attain celebrity by not looking back.

## CELEBRATION

The Thea that we knew was always on. Her nasty intentions were absorbed in the immobility of her dance. She would not be distracted. The room seemed to vibrate around her. She raised her hands. She licked her lips. The light shone down on her. She communicated with the heavens.

–The worse is yet to come.

–What, in heavens name, can you mean?

What did they mean?

Venus was beneficent. She would not withdraw her love. Thea could do no wrong. She had enough passion to overcome any ill will. She needed to protect herself.

The throng gathered around her and gave into the celebration. The music was their chant–collective and invigorating. The Imperial Set was at the top of its game.

## **DISASTER**

Such fate would have to risk its reward. Thea had no fear of what was to come. She was already beyond any disaster. She gave up the earth for another way of being.

Thea's determination only invited disaster. She needed a story. She needed someone to want her.

–We are lovers.

An artist seemed to emerge on the fringes of the scene. This would be Thea's temporary interest. And the art would destroy her. Thea's images were captured in a stiff opacity. IT seemed to rip her soul apart.

## **AFTERMATH**

There would be no coming down. Disaster needed to engender a worse fate. Thea was resplendent in her doom. So her act became prophecy and this seemed to fit her cinematic career.

–I will not be stopped.

–Are you ready to drink blood?

–If that is what I have to do.

## **BOREDOM**

There seemed to be an interminable quality to Thea's witching. How could anyone really be taken by such self-interest. The light had no relief. Without contour, she seemed faded.

–She exists without contour. That is her brilliance.

And it was,

## **DETERMINATION AND RESOLUTION**

If she is going to end, it needs to be in a more destructive fashion. So she welcomed what was to come. She predicted the future. She felt the prediction outside of her. It welcomed her.

When I looked at Thea, I could see her will in her frame. Her bones spoke about her resolution. Hallowed be the light.

### ***A SILENT FILM.***

*The mind reveals what the heart can't know!*

The driver's brake hand was not fast enough to stop the blood spatter of the speeding train.

–It could have been me.

Herr von Harbou tracked in on Thea.

–You are now Thea von Harbou.

*Although not strictly illegal, Herr von Harbou's actions are to be considered morally reprehensible.*

–I know what I have to do to make you a star.

–I am a star.

–I can make you a god.

–Does this involve human sacrifice.

–Not literally.

## DANCE

*Tremble. My heart trembles.*

*Tap to the beat.*

*–Have you forgotten?*

*–No, I remember it.*

*The performance. Hit the peak.*

*Remember the performances. Level of cool.*

### **RESPECTABILITY**

*You start off with the excitement for the dance.*

### **THE MOVE**

*the balance: the compensated move*

### **THE ARGUMENT**

*what I am telling you today.*

### **RESPECTABILITY**

*We come here*

*so we can come back here.*

*Do you have enough to go?*

*Enough to go around, enough for everyone!*

It was more the sense that from night to night a new or minor character could emerge as a goddess and then just disappear back in the night,

Enigma von Variant

Chrissi

Cheryl

Starr

Brandy

Tina  
Michelle  
Jill  
Dina  
Debbie  
Sam  
Vanessa

eye  
slow it down  
tingle

rise  
hold the past

song over  
at the lookout  
runaways  
perfect for the Twin

saw her outside her apartment  
story of child abuse

euphoria εε  
the T test

muted phrasing  
not wanting  
imperatives of caring

DREAM SAPACE  
department store

hand touch  
eyes stare  
hair

wear gloves  
contamination

Anthea the fly  
seeing and motivating  
this was the closet that I had come to being affected

we thought we were the beginning and end of history

exhausting day of taking stage directions  
posing for the camera

we learned that it's exhausting posing for the camera all day

- Don't go through all the stages. Start at the end. BOREDOM
- I'm so bored that I feel like I'm dying.
- I'm not going to last the night.
- You're acting like a spoiled suburban. Why don't you get in your little box and fucking go home. Go home to box world.
- Yeah!
- I'm not ready to leave.
- You want to get fucked in the bathroom.
- I just want to hang the fuck on.
- Do you have anything to help.
- Can't someone help me.
- You have to show more skin if you want help.
- Billy couldn't keep court any longer.
- You queens are going to have to fend for yourselves. Time for me to play monarch.

The film was running. It would take its toll on Thea.  
–It was supposed to make me immortal. Instead it's sapping my strength.  
–You give to the screen. Then your fans just take what they say. There just has to be a tradeoff.

Soon after being introduced into Theresa's living room, I was approached by a well-dressed, diminutive gentleman who spoke with a pencil-thin mustache. He spoke with a thick German accent but gave his name as Gomez, Karl Gomez.

*This all sounds like bull shit!*

- Mister Crucial, I want you to meet Mme Thea Von Harbou.
- This is ridiculous. The whole situation...
- Mme Von Harbou is the chief of our industrial films division.
- And you, Gomez, are a little fascist. What you call industrial film is an excuse to send displays of your torture devices around to other crazies.
- Thea, what are you afraid of?
- A rather personal question to ask someone that you just met, Herr Crucial.
- Seeing that we're in the States, you can drop this Herr shit. I feel like I'm on the set of Notorious.



- We wanted to do a remake.
- Surely you could set it in a better place than Atlanta. And all these fake German accents. I may seem a bit impertinent, Madam Countess. But your reputation precedes you.
- I don't know what you may have heard, but I deny it all.
- You may try to deny it, but I know what these movies are about.
- I'll admit that what we share here is special. Role-playing is all part of the game. And you seem like a worthy adversary, Herr Crucial.
- Don't flatter yourself. And while you're at it just call me Crucial.

Theresa enjoyed parlor games. And Gomez, the social fascist, was, in fact, the good doctor, Walter Dovsky. It was within his range to take on any nationality as a pose. But it would be entirely stretching the point to call him *diminutive*.

The projector was turned on. An emaciated woman huddled in a corner. Dovsky entered the room and proudly faced the camera.

- Dovsky, you need to stop this shit.
- This is where the fun begins. Crucial, you are taking this all wrong.
- I didn't expect things to happen like this. I decided that they had not. I was sitting with Theresa. I had not revealed my intentions to her. That I was using her to get to Thea.
- You mean that I don't get a film career.

*Thea, Theresa—I thought that it was the same person.*

I will continue with this version of the story. That this was my first encounter with Thea. Gomez was a fiction, although not entirely, as if existing in a parallel universe. More than that, Herr Karl was no fiction. He forced Thea to play a role.

Behind it all was Walter Dovsky—assured, reasonable, crafty.

And Thea—lithe, blonde aware.

A contrast with Courtney. Courtney seemed like a bird. Thea seemed almost insect-like, feelers grasping.

*A revision.*

- Hi sweetie. What are you doing?
- Just hanging out.
- Are you by yourself?
- Yeah!
- Are you going to bed soon.
- I'm going out later.
- You like adventures.
- Who are you?
- Just a friend.
- Do you go to the Cube?
- The Cube? That gay bar on Peachtree.
- It's not just a gay bar.
- Leather queen.

She didn't make any sense. I was half asleep before I realized I was deep in a

conversation.

- Do you like to have fun?
- Where did you get my number?
- I rang by mistake and got your answering machine. I liked the message. I thought that I'd try back.
- How could you ring back if you dialed by mistake.
- I knew that my number wasn't on my machine.
- I'm consistent. I only make the same mistake. Are you looking for fun?
- I've done this before.
- You met some girl who had phone sex with you. And she turned out to be all gross.
- I didn't say that.
- You didn't have to. Honey, if you took one look at me, you'd cream before you could get your pants off.
- And you just like phoning up guys that you don't know. I could be gross.
- You could be sexy.
- But you don't know that.
- You like to do weird things.
- Like have sex with women who call me by random.
- Are you good in bed?
- I don't know.
- How many times do you come?
- A few.
- Two or three. Or more. What are your measurements?
- How tall am I? Over six feet.
- Your dick. How big is it?
- What do you want?
- Are you lonely?
- Not really?
- You're there by yourself.
- Do you want to come over?
- I could meet you.
- OK. Where?
- Om Piedmont, there's a coffee shop. Close to the Cube.
- Are you going to walk? Or take a car?
- A car.
- What kind of car.
- A Chevy.
- I'll be in a Mercedes. I'm going to bring a friend. Do you like men?
- Yeah, I like men.
- No, do you like to have sex with men. I'll suck you off if you do my friend.
- It was starting to take an interesting turn. She intrigued me.
- You do my friend. And I might do something with you.

- I do something with you, and I might do your friend.
- It doesn't work that way. What's your favorite fragrance.
- I lied.
- Halston.
- What are you going to wear?
- A yellow shirt.
- I didn't have a yellow shirt.
- Why don't you come in the Mercedes and leave the friend.
- You're going to come on me three times.
- I'll make you feel good.
- You sound desperate. Haven't had it in a while. Tell you what, I'll send my friend by himself.
- I'm not really into guys.
- He looks great, and he suck great cock.
- Why don't you suck my cock?
- You'd like that. You know why, bitch. I'm a guy too!

## **EA THEORY**

A sit of a self-style. writer, I have the inclination to use my pen to bring to life people I only know by sight. I took as my subject Thea. I would not invent. I would chronicle. So I began to relate her story. Little did I know that I would be confronted by one of my characterizations! It would be an understatement to say I had seen Thea barely a few times. In my dream, I found myself immersed in the atmosphere of my habitual nighttime haunt. Suddenly, Thea bolted from among her circle of admirers to confront me. We were partially separated from the rest of the club. A claustrophobic corner. She grabbed my writing. She became animated.

–Why are you writing about me? Are you crazy? I'm not going to let you get involved in my life. Why are you always staring at me?

At that moment, Thea became Patty, another time, another era. Still I was faced with the finality of her words. Unlike the ordered character of my writing, the dream was beset by disorder. It upset my confidence.

To tell the story meant adding detail. You cannot actually witness the phenomenon. Just to note the events does not capture the frenzy. I would exaggerate. I was somehow part of the story. To witness prevented me from actually recording all the details of her prominence.

–The writing is only an excuse.

–I do intend to write the story. I just need to find out more.

–You can't find out what you need to know if you don't talk to her.

This was the premise of the EA theory. One could tell by looking. From the beginning, I was not supposed to interfere in the development of the story.

–I am a fiction.

I became the story. I did not write it. At the heart of the telling, it was my story. Thea would never understand that role. But my reason for focusing on her was her putting that

realization into practice. She was telling her story by acting out her story. Not only would my perspective interfere with her liberty, even her own observations would

- You’re just threatened by her independence.
- She’s appealing precisely because of her independence.
- Too much is a bad thing.
- Not at all. She’s not like any of the other characters. Not even EA. Thea is completely free to do whatever she wants. Nothing is holding her back. No one is in her way.
- You’re forgetting Courtney.
- Courtney only exists because Thea needs a rival. She needs a visible challenge to her authority.

From my intent to capture the Crucialities, I had stumbled on these extraordinary experiences. These heart-pumping intensities. Together, they suggested something. An enlightenment. A new way of being. I had felt myself crossing over. But only for a glimpse.

- Six seconds of paradise.
  - Then it’s just an intensity. A paradise would mean that it was permanent.
  - So I make it last longer.
  - Without any let down.
  - That is the Cube.
- Where the Cube was not able to grant my desire, there was a promise in my dreams. A big face at the windows. One long corridor. Everyone standing by the wall. Thea. Billy. The Count. Christopher and Joey. RIP. Courtney. They were all there in my dream and more.
- I am ready to cross over.
- The Cube was a portal.
- The world is going to end before you have a chance to go any further.
- It was all getting too close.

Would Thea cross over and then return to tell me what had happened. When she had reached that state, I knew that I would be ready to talk to her.

- A girl blocked my way to the bathroom.
- I’m not letting you by until you tell me who you are.
  - Who are you?
  - I’m Nikki.
  - Tell me who you are. What do you do.
  - I am what I do. I am Crucial.
  - What does that mean?
  - I just live being what I am. I do what I am.
  - Don’t you work?
  - When I have to?
  - How do you pay for your apartment? Or do you live here?
  - That would be an interesting option.
  - Do you want to come to a party?

–Tonight.  
 –No. In two weeks, at my place.  
 –I’ll be there.  
 –You’re just saying that.  
 –I’ll be there.  
 –You’re the guest of honor. You dance so weird.

–I didn’t think that you’d really come.  
 Nikki lived in a house off of Ponce. It had a screened in porch. I saw Cliff.  
 –She was talking about you showing up.  
 –I didn’t know that you were friends.  
 –I live here.  
 –Wow!  
 –Nikki’s really nice. No routine. No bull shit.  
 –I haven’t seen you around the Cube.  
 –I’ve been working a lot.  
 –Where do you work?  
 –I go to Tech, and I deliver pizzas.  
 –Cool. That crowd at the Cube has its own way.  
 –It does. I try to keep my distance. It’s hard to meet people there.  
 –What about Ganglia. I always see him with girls.  
 –He has his technique.  
 –Technique.  
 –He whispers in their ear and touches their back. It works every time.  
 –Have you tried that?  
 –I’m not like him. It just works for him.

I stayed a while. I heard Nikki in the other room talking about torture. I told her that I had to go.

–I’m glad that you came.  
 She gave me a big hug.

–You think that I’m only good for one thing?  
 –What?  
 –To die!  
 THE FACE!

–You people are all weird here. I can see it in your face.  
 I felt that it was all ending too fast. Before it had even had a chance to begin.  
 –Do you want to hurt me?  
 –I’m just talking to you. You don’t live here.  
 –No. I’m from Jacksonville. I’m not going to stay here for long.  
 –Don’t you have cool bars in Jacksonville.

–But it’s not like this.

She gave me a weird look.

–You want to come back to my hotel.

–Maybe. Don’t you want to hang out here for a while.

–Come on back with me. We can have fun. I can order up room service, and we can watch movies. I’m here in my Dad’s car. I have money. We can have a great time.

It was a boring night. I felt tempted.

–Don’t look at me so strange. I’m a girl.

I didn’t have doubts. I didn’t know enough of her story. For me there was no way out.

She drove me from the Cube back to her hotel. Everything seem so accelerated as if I had known her for years. I just wanted to stay here. She let us order up room service. I’d already had dinner, but I didn’t mind a snack.

–Girls like shrimp.

She gave me a big smile.

–I like you. It’s just that place gave me the creeps.

–Are you into the supernatural?

–I’ve seen ghosts.

She made a spooky face.

–I’m a ghost. I know who you are. You go to the Temple of Doom. I’ve brought you here so you can kill me.

Then she started this horrible giggling.

–I’ve been drinking too much champagne.

–You keep mentioning death.

–I’m joking with you. Why? Does it appeal to you?

–What?

–Killing me.

–I barely know you.

–Do you want to sleep with me?

The offer seemed tempting.

–I didn’t bring you up here just to eat my shrimp.

–This isn’t supposed to happen.

–You think that there’s something wrong with me.

–Not at all. But why?

–I’m lonely. I’m visiting on business. I don’t want you to go.

We cuddled in her bed and fell asleep. I think that she was teasing me.

–You’ll remember me!

–What?

–The face of death.

I looked puzzled.

She taped a picture of David Sylvian of *Japan* to her mirror. She was dying her hair a platinum blonde and wanted it just right. This was her model, not Annie Lenox or some other

lesser luminary. She was close to the source. She felt it shine on her.

The dye didn't quite take, and she had her own flavor of orange. But it still looked outrageous. She felt like a peacock as she blended yellow and purple shade above her eyes. This was going to be her night. She elongated the strokes to express her sense of liberty.

She found a Pierrot shirt in her closet. It expressed her intense sense of anarchy. She slipped on a pair of black tights and silver flats. She was born to make trouble.

She worked her way into the crowded Cube. It was a Thursday night. A hearty dose of regulars. Both bartenders were busy. It was a great night.

She tried to position herself close to the bar. She wanted the lights of attention to shine on her. She had arrived at 12:30. But she found that she was now being overwhelmed by the crowd. The night started to explode in its ecstasy. But she only felt alone in the crowd. She wanted to go home.

This was awful. Her perfume lingered on the floor. She became the ghost that she felt that she was. Had anyone taken the time to say anything to her? Did anyone notice her?

The Cube wasn't the place to let a newcomer emerge into the spotlight. She only felt jostled by drinkers trying to get close to the bar. A quick exit was her only strategy. Her delightful appearance was small consolation to the rejected in the crowd. There was little mercy here.

–What an ugly dog!

Were they talking about her?

–Don't leave, honey. I'll buy you a drink.

–Get out of my way!

–What got into you?

–Fortunately it wasn't a weak dick like you.

She hustled her way out the door. Was time going backwards? She wondered. She looked at the picture of David as she got ready for bed.

A willing Tommy had obliged the scene and taken Courtney out of circulation. Thea had made a sacrifice, but one only too good for her ascendancy.

*One of these days Thea will show up here in a form beyond human. I've been waiting for this and know the result is p..approaching. When it does, I will be amazed. But I will be the only one, as only I will see the change. Until that moment, each night will seem terribly the same. I will not be able to relate to her. Recognize Thea a child star in toothpaste commercials. She ending back in Iowa as dear Dorothea. Dorothea. At fifteen she changes the spelling and swears off Midwestern boys. She stays in her room for days on end. Mother becomes worried. Something is happening. All that experience wasn't going to be wasted.. Where else is magic manufactured.*

*Do we have to go backwards or forwards for things to make sense?*

*ALL FORWARD AND THEN BACK!*

Nikki was into some kind of industrial torture. After the party, I wouldn't have suspected anything. She thought of humans as adjuncts to machines.

–How could you be involved in something so reprehensible?  
 –It’s what I do, what we all do—it’s the Cube. You don’t understand the organism. That’s what it is. Watch out for the tentacles!

*For your crimes, you are forbidden to look at Thea!*

–I can never be part of it... what is it... all your silly jokes about vampires it's a cosmic sex game the best...everyone here is dying ....

–If you can't take it, you don't want to play  
 –There's no powere here .... the only power over anyone is death ..... all your friends are animals!

Janice was Nikki’s friend from Detroit. I knew that they were planning something bizarre.

–This is Thea’s place. She doesn’t take kindly to competition.  
 –It’s part of her plan.

What plan? Thea’s headaches were getting worse. It seemed that everything was moving towards the confrontation between Thea and Courtney.

Bertie came in looking for her own version of laxity. She saw Thea at the other side of the club. She wanted to seduce her.

–If I leave with you, everyone will see me.  
 –If you come home with me, I can make you feel good.  
 –Guys say that kind of shit to me all the time.

Later that night, they were cuddling in a corner. Bertie thought that this might give her a chance to move into Thea’s circle. Thea had other things on her mind. She just needed a distraction for the night.

–I know that she is getting weaker.  
 Something was going to upset all the Imperial Set.

Even with the turmoil, Christina realized that it was hopeless trying to upset the order. Why was Courtney hanging around like an heir apparent? Not only would she have to challenge Thea, now she would have to confront Courtney as well.

–It might be better if you just left Atlanta.  
 The Encino Kid had arrived to visit Crucial. An unexpected visit.  
 –Who’s that?  
 –Chistina von Mayhem.  
 –She’s cute.  
 –Don’t let the name fool you.  
 –Maybe she’d do better somewhere based on luck.  
 –Where? The ocean.  
 –The ocean of sand and sin–Vegas.



They both left for Vegas at the end of the week.  
I was trying to tell another story. Nikki, Christina, Encino—it all came back to Thea. She smiled!

Nikki saw a victim.  
—I know a great place to dance.  
She led him out through a trap door.  
—She combines rodent parts with a machine. There's a name for that.  
—Creation.  
—Sex?

When Bertie and Thea left, Anthea could only watch. She had used and abused Bertie. Taken her under her wing. Now she was to do the devil's work. But the devil's work would not last. There were worse devils in the Cube.

<b>THEA</b> image without reprehensible	Can pure image be reduced to a physical presence?	<b>ANTHEA</b> pure image
Thea is without-ness. No wonder she has recently remained scarce.		
<b>AUDRA</b> Pure magic. Don't think that she isn't reprehensible. Magic is the substitute for wealth. Pure satisfaction without residue—childish.		<b>COURTNEY</b> She is the image in action. She's already in action. She does not act for a reason. She acts. She cannot be reprehensible.
	When Thea does what Courtney does, she is reprehensible!	

—What is reprehensible?  
—If a character acts in a way in spite of herself, this is reprehensible. Satisfaction without consequence.  
—Paul says that Atlanta is image-conscious.  
—He only has it half right. It is an image of emptiness. That's why it needs the reprehensible. That is the plenitude. To fill the emptiness up with more of the same—its reverse, evil.

## **AFTER THE DREAM**

- You are forbidden to look at Thea or you will be turned into ash.
- I know that story. I think the destruction of the world goes along with it. We're already living that movie.
- Who's the director?
- Some psycho in D.C.
- Wow!
- Yeah.
- Someone has a conscience.
- The one pushing the buttons. It's all for a reason!

Thea started to be afraid that she was losing her powers. She spent more time with Nikki and Gomez.

- Are they going to wire you up?
  - That's all bull shit.
  - Then why do you have that weird smile?
  - That's my secret.
  - They do tie you up?
  - You're acting silly.
- Thea needed a new excuse. She walked around with an envelope.
- My soul's in the envelope.
- It was all fitting in place.

The focus shifted to Audra and Rita. Thea needed to keep a low-profile. She was hiding out.

## THE INTERVIEW WITH COURTNEY

*We interviewed her in a park. She sat on a swing of a swing-set.*

What is the most exciting thing that you do?  
*Apply lipstick.*

What about mascara?  
*Don't be silly—that's boring. I'm serious.*

What are you most afraid of?  
That you'll ask me a question that I can't answer.

Do you love yourself?  
*Sometimes.*

*When you dance, you raise your hands in the air like a bird. Do you want to fly?  
I do it because I feel like it. There's no special reason.*

When you fall in love, how long does it last?

*That depends. It never lasts.*

Why do you hate Thea?

*I don't hate. In fact, we made love once. Her kisses are so acidic. They fill you with an electric fire; they will drain you.*

Are you afraid of losing yourself?

*Once I lost a purse, bright green plastic. For the next week, I couldn't remember my own name. I stayed in the house all the time except one day that I went out at 5:30 in the morning and got lost. Tommy found me and brought me back home. He helped me get back to normal.*

What secret is always chasing you?

*You ask the strangest questions. I imagine that this big white cat is scratching at me. I'm wearing a fur collar, and there's blood all over it. So I use the blood to color my face. Then I start to prance on all fours. Tommy finds me and gets me all cleaned up, just in time for work.*

Why is Thea afraid of you?

*This is nonsense. I haven't seen her in weeks. She hardly comes around anymore... OK, I poisoned her. [THEA: I knew it!] When she and I and Tommy made love, she would make this deafening high-pitched screech. Tommy didn't understand her.*

Have you ever seen Tommy's blood?

*What nonsense—yeah, he cut himself shaving.*

Have you ever seen him bleed?

*Yes! He cut himself once like a game—a ritual—and it flowed. He stopped it somehow. But I needed.*

I don't feel like anything anymore, Courtney. I'm having trouble with the interview.

*You want me to tell you about the crow that appears whenever I'm having sex. It flies in through the wall and sits on the bedpost. And the pleasure continues. The rubbing. But I'm talking to the crow. He tells me that no one will care about me unless I have something that they want. And if I gave it to them, they wouldn't need it anymore. And Tommy thinks that we're having fun. But when I am with the crow, only the crow understands. What's wrong with me? The crow whispers the secret word to me, and I can feel my ears start to bleed. Then I see the crow talking, but I can't understand a thing. So I scream the secret word. But it's all confused as I can hear myself and am continually getting lost. Tommy hears me scream, and I jump up. I put on my red bathrobe, and I close it with the silver clasp.*

*Tommy's been gone for hours. The light is on in my bedroom. And I'm staring at it. Finding the secret word, but it's not really a word. And it become an image. And it starts to talk. And I talk back. Just trying to keep up. I'm talking faster and faster. And I'm streaming words in all sorts of strange ways. Now I do not feel afraid. A woman comes in the room. She*

*kisses me. Then she turns into a pile of hair.*

*One time Tommy and I had been making love all night. So we got dressed in the morning and went for a walk. We got to a park like this one. It had swings. This guard came by and told us that we would have to pay if we wanted to use the swings. We told him that we didn't have any money. So he had us make love while he watched. Tommy started complaining in the middle that the lower part of his body was being cut off. I looked down and it all seemed OK.*

*For that whole month, I slept all the time. I didn't go to the Cube. When I woke up, I was really sick. I had a transfusion. They placed me in an ice cold pool to wash me, to get rid of my fever. I was given a needle, and I felt better. I asked for Tommy. He was nowhere. The doctor came in and wiped my eyes away. I had a bite on my neck.*

Courtney, can you teach me how to grow flowers?

*Only morning glories.*

Put all your ideas in this envelope.

*I did already. A long time ago.*

I'm going to burn this envelope unless you teach me how to sleep. This is no game. Keep your distance that the interview is over. Thea is serious.

–No, not about Tommy. She hardly knows who he is.

–No about Tommy. About you. I am the messenger. You will lose your power if you don't stop her.

–You're kidding.

–Couldn't you tell by my stare. Thea will find out. You're a fool. You're far too friendly. I thought that you were good. That you could recognize what was going on. But they had you suckered. What more could I have done?

–You could have told me, Crucial.

–We don't talk.

–You could have warned me. Your bloody stare! You're not telling me anything, and now she's going to fuck me up. You're just trying to take my identity from me. You want to sexify me, but you don't want to have to say anything. All your mystical crap. It doesn't work.

I told Thea about the Crow. She said that Courtney was just trying to throw me off. She looked at me with her mirror-like stare. Her face became white. I touched her forehead and...

–Audra!

–The temperature's dropped.

–Courtney's here.

–Don't worry, Thea. She's here with Tommy. I know that for sure.

–But she's both places at once.

–What?

–I just want to leave the room. But she'll follow me.

**CRUCIAL FINDS THAT HE IS UNABLE TO WRITE AND ENLISTS THE HELP OF ANDRE:**

CRUCIAL: When are we going to do the investigation?

ANDRE: We don't need to do the investigation.

CRUCIAL: Are you going to say that you know without doing the investigation.

ANDRE: What I already know is more interesting than anything that we're going to find out.

CRUCIAL: We'll find out about her secret.

ANDRE: I don't believe that she has a secret.

CRUCIAL: You're denying something that's beyond the imagination to understand. (pause)  
What is the question that we're trying to ask?

ANDRE: There are two questions. The first is what is behind the image.

CRUCIAL: Is there substance behind appearance and why do you have such a desire of meaning?

ANDRE: You're the one who has desire for meaning, which is essentially the second question..

CRUCIAL: What is the second question.

ANDRE: How you are making excuses for your infatuation.

CRUCIAL: If I'm infatuated, there must be something to be infatuated with.

ANDRE: The infatuation has no relationship to its object. You're adding your interest to a bad situation in order to make it seem better.

**CRUCIAL FIRST ENCOUNTERS ANDRE**

After having spent the night reading, Crucial falls asleep in his clothes. He is awakened by the apparition of the poet Andre.

-I've just been reading your work.

-Let's get out of here and go get a drink.

MonoPoly: Why do you hate us so much?

EA: I don't hate you. I'm just afraid if  
I tell you my secrets that you'll go ahead and  
tell everybody and then they won't mean  
that much anymore,

MonoPoly: You're getting really weird.

EA: They why are you still hanging around?

MonoPoly: We're still your friends. We want to  
help you.

(All this is communicated without speaking as the friends have arrived at a higher state of being-telepathy interchange.)

ANDRE: This is ridiculous. Now you are giving hidden powers to the mediocre.

CRUCIAL: You're being elitist. They seem mediocre, but they are in touch with realms that we can only dream about.

(Andre laughs.)

ANDRE: Where did you pull that from?

CRUCIAL: It wasn't pulled. It emerged. They want it, they like it, they have. You just think about it. They don't need your poetry. They are what they are, and they enjoy it. They don't need you. You want to force them.

ANDRE: They persecute your darling EA. And you just want to sleep with them.

MonoPoly: sleep with him—he's too bizarre.

EA: I've got to get to class.

MonoPoly: Wait for us. We want to walk with you.

Polly: I'm too tied to walk. Let's get another doughnut.

ANDRE: Why do you let Crucial get off the hook?

MonoPoly: You know he's right.

ANDRE: He's putting words in your mouth.

*Andre wants them to be afraid of him and to clap when he enters the room.*

CRUCIAL: Get back here, Andre. What are you trying to do, take my place?

*We carry on later in the conversation.*

CRUCIAL: When I said B, I meant *bitch*.

ANDRE: I thought that you meant *bee*, because Courtney is a bug.

CRUCIAL: No, Courtney is a bird; Thea is an inset.

ANDRE: What about Tommy?

CRUCIAL: He can change his shape at will depending on what substance he is taking.

ANDRE: Are these discussion between Mono and Poly meant to be actual discussions, or are they only examples?

CRUCIAL: You want to know what the point is to this. This is original and essential. You claim that you don't have any secrets, but you ask me to reveal their secrets. Devious.

Mono: Do you think that EA can hear us now ?

Poly: I just think that she knows too much for her own good. Never trust girls like her.

She'll just dump Bob.

Mono: Not without your help.

Poly: I'm just making the best of a bad situation.

Poly: No, just the best of a worse situation.

EA: When can you talk about someone that you like, without talking about what they're like?

Poly: Only if you don't really like them.

CRUCIAL: Are you trying to tell me something?

Mono: She's only taking to you as a friend.

EA: If I did, I wouldn't need to tell you about it. I would just tell you.

Mono: If he's that cute, you don't have to say anything more about him. Any more talk and you end up doing nothing about it.

CRUCIAL: What do you think about all this?

ANDRE: Maybe Crucial should listen to Mono.

CRUCIAL: Do you think that he should?

ANDRE: That is just a suggestion.

CRUCIAL: Do you think that EA is listening to Mono?

ANDRE: Do you think that Mono is listening to Poly.

Poly: Why do you like him so much if you hate him so much?

ANDRE: Here are the choices: He's good in bed.

He's so cute.

I just don't know.

CRUCIAL: I regret that this is happening. EA is too smart for all this.

ANDRE: EA the concept.

CRUCIAL: No, EA the reality.

ANDRE: Then why does she keep coming back.

CRUCIAL: She wants to know.

*Later.*

CRUCIAL: EA has no need to hate anyone she know. When she wants something, she goes out and gets it. If you or your ally Mono want to call it love, so be it. Cut your crap about dualism. There is no hate here.

ANDRE: If EA is so happy getting it, then why is she moaning to Mono and Poly.

EA: I'm just trying to better myself.

ANDRE: Crucial doesn't think that it's necessary.

CRUCIAL: Are you trying to catch me in a dilemma. The attraction is purely physical.

ANDRE: Purely physical or pure physicality.

CRUCIAL: You're playing with words again.

ANDRE: It's better than playing with the absurd.

CRUCIAL: How do they talk about it without losing track of what they're talking about.

ANDRE: They can't because they're stupid.. That's why there are two of them.

CRUCIAL: They can't be that stupid. They get what they want.

ANDRE: And they disagree with you. But it's all like talking about the Encino Kid and his cars.

CRUCIAL: Isn't EA trying to define in a rudimentary way what cute is.

ANDRE: And she won't be happy until she does. You're trying to portray EA as miserable, trying to give her the mind to go along with the looks. Talk about dualism.

CRUCIAL: I'm only reporting back what I see or what I hear. Are you going to accuse me of anything less?

ANDRE: You want to destroy her.

CRUCIAL: Isn't that a little extreme.

ANDRE: You want to give her a mind to go along with the look. The dualism. You're making her question the things that she takes for granted.

CRUCIAL: She's going through a new awareness. She knows something that you don't know.

ANDRE: And you don't know it either. You'll never surrender.

CRUCIAL: You assume if she can't put it into words that she doesn't know it. She doesn't have to say it. If she likes Bob, she goes after him, and gets him. There's no debating about words.

EA: Well don't I get to say anything.

MonoPoly: Sometimes your friends know things about you that you're afraid to admit to yourself. We see that you like him!

EA: I'm after something more fundamental and I can't recognize what cute is until I put it into words—my words.

ANDRE: Is it EA & Crucial VS. Mono. Poly, and Andre.

CRUCIAL: I think that you have more of an ally in EA than you are willing to admit.

Remember, Andre. Don't confuse Courtney and EA. If EA has a philosophical objection, she'll at according to her philosophy. But if Courtney has an objection, she' reject the objection and act according to her heart. Thea carries on our theme, and Courtney is her counterpart.

ANDRE: This is going to get you in trouble.

Courtney knows every button on the machine and every string to pull.

—We're so glad that you could come and share yourself with us.

—Turn down the volume on the TV.

—He's always watching Bullwinkle.



- He doesn't like whores.
- Does he ever look in the mirror.
- Yeah.
- What does he see?
- Emptiness.

*They think that sex is cosmic.  
What is?*

*It's not  
L-O-V-E.*

- It's called *Candyland*.
- It's run by Kean-Luc and some whore.
- It's not about pleasure but activity.
- Pure sublimation.

## THE INVESTIGATIONS

*I was seized by this paralysis. I couldn't have been mistaken. I explored this paradise, and I held your hand, and I felt you drawing me along. As I came so close, I found you were not there. Maybe there was a simple explanation: that you had moved off, perhaps continuing the exploration from another direction.*

*Another paradise: damage your encroachment on my happiness.*

*This feeling tore me off the ground. I felt that my desire scratched at me. I began to feel wounded--slashed in the back of the legs-- hit in the back, my neck broken. I told myself that this was for a better cause. That I was stripping away my self. But if she was this paradise, I would have felt assaulted.*

*calm: just like that.*

*as that was all there was to it. Paradise cutting into me.*

*All this happening so fast, so intermittently that I could not control the burst of pain.*

*I wanted to stutter--I told you about it. Then it would not happen, or the I could savor the approach and the subsequent paradise. This approach would move. towards another paradise. It would swerve away from paradise's promise.*

*I imagine another version. As I caught sight of the Paradise. so I would scream to you. You could drag me out before I became too lost*

*I don't like how this version is going.*

*Why do I see you disappearing?*

*Or another version; you helping me along--coloring things--*

*I was glad that she was not with me for this part. What had I been?*

*You walked around thinking about it all the time. You started to make plans. Paradise filled everything that you did. But you pressed me. You wanted to know about my paradise. This would be my story: You pushed me. And I wanted to stop. But you said that this wasn't enough. You wanted to feel it. And I told you there. You said that my paradise was faded. I told that what follows would only be paradise for me. When did I trip and make the mistake? Why did you press me to move on? You could have pushed me to move on. You could have arrived here without me.*

*And I started to do things to her. I said this wanted me. It's the paradise that enjoys pain.*

*thinking. what it had been thinking it-or me .*

*Could I have continued? Then, would my desire to continue have been torn up--damaged, if only paradise had found an accomplice.*

*Can I say that I am unaffected by the experience. That I enjoy the wreckage; I am desire's assassin. I can't rectify the damage done. I hid from everyone else that it was me.*

–I have to enjoy the pain. Then he can off me.

–You're crazy! You're all crazy.

–We're learning how to enjoy the inevitable.

–You're speeding it up. You're making it more inevitable. You're acting like gods.

–We are gods.

–Thea, only the supernatural will save you.

–That's Audra's thing. Her bracelets and what not.

–You're going to need her help.

–I don't want anyone's help. I never did anything wrong.

–It's not about right or wrong. It's about surviving.

The Cube started to have this strange feeling. Electricity was shaking the place.

–Thea. Albert can help you too.

–What?

–He who hesitates is lost.

–I'm not a he; I'm a she. And what are you?

–I'm an Albert.

–What's an Albert.

–I'm someone that can help.

–It's not that I really need help.

–I know that you are way beyond help. But you still need me.

–I hardly know who or what you are or can be or claim to be. How are you going to help?

People said that Rita could help. I know that they're getting her confused with Audra. One does magic, and the other just stands there and tries to look magical. But none of that is going to do me much good.

- I can stop Courtney for you.
- Who said that she needed stopping?
- It may be fatal if you do nothing.
- Courtney and Tommy are going to kill me.
- They’ve been hanging off of each other.
- So the intense feelings between the both of them are eventually going to get turned against me.
- I’m not saying that.
- So what do I have to fear from Courtney. She can’t even command attention long enough to make a difference.
- It’s worse than you can know.
- Are you attracted to her.
- I’ve been sent to try to help.
- Try. And if you fail.
- I’m just warning you to be ready.
- Ready how? Do I need reinforcements by air.
- You need something!

The fairies were no doubt going to side with Courtney. A darker magic was in order for Thea. But she had always been associated with the light. In a sense, this was a world that lived in the negative. The more that it became associated with darkness, the more the room remain lit by it light. The more that the group pursued death, the more they seemed obsessed with life. This was the contradiction of the Cube that was lost on the outsider. Everyone seemed so shallow because no one noticed this other layer. You had to become initiated to see beyond. So Audra was preparing her assault. Her magics had always been part of the social exchange. She offered remedies that helped everyone remain sane. Now she had to call on powers greater than sanity.

RIP felt that it was his position to arbitrate the battle. In many ways, he was the most vulnerable as his power was totally connected to the Cube.

- Are we making history of just taking part in someone else’s story?
- RIP, don’t you know any magic.
- Honey, the things that I know could shake the world apart.
- You better get your wand in order. Now is the time to strike.

RIP was more helpless than he let on. Sure, he had conjuring powers that might tear apart the battle scene. But he would have to surrender his ambitions to those forces. He still wanted to remain of this earth. He didn’t want to owe the infernal for such minor rewards for himself.

- I have bigger and brighter things planned.
- If sacrifice was necessary, he was not going to make it.
- This is for the boys in shirts, not the men in skirts.

Audra suddenly felt the vacuum that had opened for her. Thea knew that the confrontation was coming. She didn’t want to waste her energy until that confrontation. So she made her profile scarce. This put Audra at the heart of the action. She was always in the shadow. Even Anthea’s socializing had kept her from really showing her own skills. Now she

was working the room. She was lobbying for her own techniques. If the Imperial Set had a dark side, it was starting to manifest itself. This was the transition from gossip to back stabbing. The weapons of her war were without bounds.

Christopher was already drawn to this nefarious side. He knew its powers. He felt a need to intercede. Audra's necromancy needed to be curtailed or the Imperial Set would face imminent ruin. Sure an effect was needed. It was strange that Christopher was assuming this role of sober advisor. It meant that the aims of the Titans were being redirected. Worse, it represented a real curtailing of their power. Even if he was drawn to the warlock's arts, it was more of an academic fascination. He was providing a science to the scene's superstitions. This would leave the hierarchy of its royalty vulnerable to some future assault. But this was the apparent weakness of the group in the first place. Its incestuous roots only left it open to invasion. Already it was suffering from internal bickering and lack of new ideas. If the blood did not flow, the group would give out of its own accord. They could be starved out of existence.

Christopher challenged the notion of the Imperial Set. But he did it by carrying out its principles of nobility. He still was taken to costume as the measure of the self. His flair was confident. His positivity only made the set gain a new foundation. Billy could let the squabble play itself out as if the scene was powerful enough to absorb whatever would follow.

Audra saw a different path. Her musings went to the heart of what the Cube was about. She did not shy away from the morbid preoccupations of the patrons. People didn't seek amusement through risky behaviors. It wasn't the pleasure itself that motivated the Set. It was the danger. They could taste something that made them afraid. They were cautious as they clung to their everyday mediocrity. The lights of the Cube made them exceptional. This would be their risk. Temporary but invigorating in its own way.

They had given Audra her opening. They needed the masks. The costumes demanded more elaborate make up. She could play the face as it was needed to be presented. As their model, she became their make up artist. For herself, she chose a face that gave her access to this other world. It exaggerated. It said too much because she was passing into this realm herself. There were the demands of theater. But she used the shadows. The ghosts were being called to life.

All her actions raised more fundamental questions about the Cube itself. The location had always seemed meager. The light show was garish. Everything about the room seemed an add-on. But all these factors served to wake up the spirits. Some presence held the Imperial Set in awe. And Audra had always gratified this specter. So her role was more prominent than ever. For a while, Thea seemed like a prop in the presentation. She was only an effect of the lights. The set designer held court, and Audra welcomed her new role.

Albert's support of Thea was proving invaluable. But it had convinced her to save her energies. The Cube was still thriving without its heavy hitter. Even Billy needed a rest. The nights still twirled with the magnificent tunes. The dances were just as extravagant with the absence of the required stars. Audra showed that she was more than a schemer. She let herself go. There were pockets of brilliance. And she filled one of these spots. There was no attempt on her part to supplant any of the royals. She was noble precisely because of their patronage, and she knew it.

Despite the brilliant counsel offered by Christopher, Audra, RIP, and Albert, none could supplant the insight that a Dovsky could add to the scene. He would have recognized that you would have to move heaven and earth if there was to be a resolution of this problem.

RIP			
	CHRISTOPHER		
		AUDRA	
			ALBERT

*This is the product of their combined efforts.*

<RIP> <CHRISTOPHER>< AUDRA> <ALBERT>

<b>DOVSKY</b>	RIP			
	1	CHRISTOPHER		
		1	AUDRA	
			1	ALBERT
				1

**DOVSKY** x1x1x1x1 > <RIP> <CHRISTOPHER>< AUDRA> <ALBERT>

*Dovsky in the **POWER POSITION** could outdo the combined efforts of the four. If we can conceive of such a power, then the forces acting on the story at this moment must be at least as great as Dovsky could bring to bear on the narrative.*

*We need help!*

As the Imperial Set was being shaken at its very foundations, it appeared that the narrative was summoning up deeper forces for a resolution. Courtney herself could not marshal these forces. But her actions were at the heart of the changes. Here was the dilemma. The four superheros combined with Thea were standing in the way of what seemed to be the progressive development of the story. Although the Titans had started out as a FICTION, their claims on accuracy were now a threat to the very telling of their story. As the actions moved towards calamity, they were trying to hold back an inevitable. On one theory, their meddling was creating the very shifts necessary to engender the disaster.

- What are we going to do?
- Stock up on bread and milk.

–I don't drink milk and the bread seems pretty nasty.

Albert was at Thea's apartment preparing warm rum drinks. The Cube was blasting with the loudest tunes. I was crashed in my apartment. I had tried to take a nap so that I could be ready for tonight's action. Instead I had slept through the night. Only Courtney had used this night to her advantage. She was indeed readying her assault on the Cube. Everyone else was mired in fear. **FEAR!**

Jean-Luc wanted to remain neutral amid the fray. He knew that the Imperial Set could deal the death knell to any club in the city. Still he longed for the Cube to go down. Could he accelerate. Such was his proposal every night. If he could push the envelope of pleasure, perhaps that need would reverberate elsewhere in the world. He was a ruthless entrepreneur.

His regime dominated his Paradise. It was a loose application of Sade. Satisfaction was to be deferred. Activity was to take precedence over resolution. The phallic authority needed to be challenge, and he offered scenes that would stretch the bounds of anticipation. Desire took two forms—the protector and the planter. The planter wanted to maintain his vision. He claimed his property. The protector was more circumspect. He suggested action for the purpose of exciting the activity. He did not want any one scene to dominate any other. Sexual penetration was the least favored model of coupling. Although Jean-Luc contradicted his principles for his economic well-being.

–I've got a beautiful couple fucking in the back room. There's a charge. One hundred to get in the room. And you can get a bottle for another one hundred and fifty.

Pleasure was not cheap!

His Paradise was so different than the Cube. Trendy designers reigned at the Cube. But at Jean-Luc's place, it was all about sheer ostentation. Elegant gowns and tuxedos were not unusual.

–Note how the realm of pleasure are mapped onto his erect member.

–Can we touch it?

If he was to break the phallic monarchy, he had to explore it in its full articulation.

–This is why we believe what we see. It is the core of desire. Like a paint brush, we paint the world that we see. But each stroke is an expression of desire and takes us back to the self.

The Cube entertained a denial even if it was violated behind the scenes. Jean-Luc emphasized affirmation. There was no holding back. A complete flowing of inhibition.

–What about our desire to dominate? Surely that is the essence of your Phallic Constitution.

–I only give you what you already want. It is the frustration that is the source of the aggression.

–If you always get what you want, then you don't have to worry about aggression.

–Maybe docility.

The question was postponed, as dominance and aggression were invested in all the rituals at his place. Jean-Luc even had a mean streak that he attempted to disguise beneath the elaborate

theories. But if one played they game, there was no limit.

–All the facets of your desire are represented here. It is all about excess. Even as you are taken by one partner, you want to share your intensities with another. Think about how you are sexual. You want to give. But to give, you first have to take. You hope that your taking will be pleasurable for the partner. That is part of the oral sensation. You project your desire onto a physical action, sucking. And this act becomes the most powerful act. You stimulate your partner with your mouth. This stimulation is at its most intense when your partner senses the surrender of will to the other. You are not having sex with another body. You engaging another will.

>>We try to protect ourselves against the invasion of the will. Once we let go of our defenses, we will offer the world to the partner. This is also the moment that jealousy could take hold. Here it is necessary to welcome the other. It is precisely this moment that we become aware of our physicality. The free flow of our liberties conjugate with our partner. For our scenes, this is where we welcome the other.

>>It seems that woman are more giving in this welcome. This is wonderful. I love their bodies. There is no limit to how I can become lost in the ups and downs of their desires.

–Doesn't this moment also contradict your theory?. The desire to insert the erect penis into the woman's vagina obliterates all appeal to some other scenic arrangement. When the two participants let loose, there is nothing else that seems as pleasurable. The couple ride each other.

–But your image is the contradiction of the pleasures that we offer. If you have one description that is so dominating, you can't entertain other forms of communion. Often, the described scene is just a way to exclude all other forms of satisfaction. We satisfy so we can deny the roots of satisfaction.

The described arrangements had a close resemblance to what went on at the Cube. Perhaps, the Cube was better at implementing Jean-Luc's ideal. Realistically, rich men went to Jean-Luc's to gratify their sexual whims. Sure his club had another purpose. But that was its main reason for existence—its life blood. At the Cube, Thea and Courtney had transformed the local into their house of pleasure. They easily rendered the phallic dominators to a lonely exile in the night. If the tourists attempted to impose their will, they were banishes from the Cube. It was all about Thea's satisfaction in contradiction to the traditional sexual experience. It suggested a state beyond sexuality. Jean-Luc provided an extension of the slavery of daily experience. He thought that it was revolutionary to push things to extreme. But he showed the more obvious face of the society in which he lived. He would object.

–There is no society. Not as you pretend. It's part of your abstract lies. The scene, the club, the social set. All these ideas that stand in the way of true pleasure. You condemn Ganglia because he enjoys himself. Girls love him. He gets what he wants. You complain from the sidelines and try to restrict his pleasures. He is living. You are already dead. You have accepted death.

>>That's what our scenes do. They create societies in order to overthrow them. The world of the penis needs to be overthrown. And here it is. It is a paradise because the will roams free. The body is everywhere, and it is nowhere.

I was glad that Jean-Luc seemed so considerate about the bank accounts of his patrons.

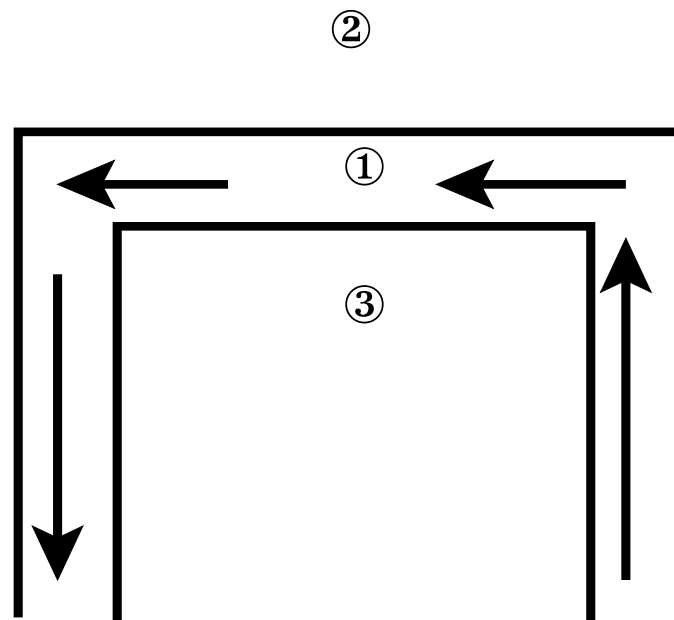
–We encourage beauty. Everyone can find their beauty here. They just need to give in to

their desires. There is nothing more beautiful than a woman's face during passion.

–A man will not be denied.

I worried that his palace only encouraged a desire to be dominated. The ideal was precisely that. It invited the weak to extend weakness to the more vulnerable.

Besides the back bedroom which offered the ultimate in viewing pleasure, the club had a section called the passageway. It allowed geometric fascinations to be expressed in the most intense of desires.



The passageway bore a resemblance to the peep show. From position 1, the viewer could observe the subject at position 3. The intent was the subject would provide sexual entertainment for the viewer. The viewer would be allowed to participate in his own way. But he could not cross the glass barrier that separated him from his subject. What made the passageway so significant was its overall layout. It invited the viewer to the source by a long corridor that served as the stations of his passion. The invitation was evident. At each stage, he was being prepared for a further exercise of his desire.

To enter this funhouse, you needed to cross a bridge at the entrance. You were crossing the river of no return. With this crossing, there was an element of regret. You could not go back. The viewers were driven by the glowing lights at the end of the dark passage. They did not want to look back. But they did not understand the full purpose of this projection. Since the passageway suggested participation, its entryway was much steeper—from two hundred to five hundred dollars.



–It’s worth it!

After entry, video images projected on the wall. Hunger was encouraged. The geometric excesses of the construction were matched by the balletic movements of the bodies. You entered an idea so that you could observe another idea. This allowed you to participate even when you could not touch the object of desire.

The intent of the first corridor was to extend the development of desire. The movement through the passage was meant to be tedious. This only prepared the way for a deeper anticipation.

–It’s not what you see. It’s what you want to see.

Even before you could enter the desired place of viewing, cameras offered a preview of what you would see. They also permitted viewing of other delights throughout the building. They accustomed the viewers to scenes of representation. Everything was on display so that you expected a more profound show. The invitation was endless. Even if you could touch what you saw, it would only open you to another realm of the imagined, the desired, the acquired.

–Can I talk to her?

–You will be able to talk to her.

–I want to take her home.

The contradiction of the eventual viewing was the more the subject became involved in her activity, the less that she was able to talk. The viewer felt gagged by all that he wanted to say but could not. If he was now satisfied, it only led to a frustration that could only yield to an increased desire.

–Do you want us to hurt you. To put you out of your misery.

Now the viewer was entering the summit of his journey. At position 1, he watched the player at position 2. He had been offered a promise. She seemed to yield to his command.

–I want to see your insides. I want to see more.

He could not stop with his limited view. Since he could not touch, he wanted others to touch her.

–You are being cured of your jealousy. What do you want?

He could feel the walls open up. The screen that separated them went down. Every viewer swore to the impossible. This was not the peep show. This was a house of illusion. For all the implied magic, there might have been no one acting at position 2. If there were participants, they provided a sex show.

–The price is going up. The more that you want to see, the more that you’ll have to pay.

–Can I bring friends.

Others moved across the bridge. What was seen was mirrored at position 1. Here was a sex show.

Jean-Luc introduced position 3 in the equation. There were infinite position 3's. The viewer’s outlook would degenerate into a place of participation.

–Will you join me in watching sex.

–If you watch with me, I’ll want to touch you.

The ambiguities of sexual boundaries seemed to disappear.

–I need drugs if I don’t want to go insane.

The self was erased.

But position 3 also offered the flip-side of the equation. It intensified the frustration of the viewer at position 1. He was condemned to watch with no real access to his satisfaction. He was being robbed of his dignity. The vantage point of position 3 allowed a more advanced viewer to laugh at the participant in position 1. It made it necessary to deny the participant of the means to escape his servility. At times, it obviated the need for position 2. There was nothing to watch. The participant could not share his delights. He only seemed more and more ravaged by his desire.

–You’re even more pathetic than when I first met you.

–I’ve got money.

–Not enough.

And each failure would only increase the entry price. Everyone wanted to pay. The rumors preceded the reality. The rumors created their own reality.

–What do you want to see?

–Is there anything that you haven’t seen.

–I want to see death.

–Who the fuck are you?

–I’m your worst nightmare.

–Don’t leave. I need you more than you need me.

The ravages of Jean-Luc’s sex club were obvious. No wonder the Cube sought a more profound immortality.

–Is there any other?

–You have to take by not giving in.

–Do you want to see me whipped?

–It’s all in the suggestion. I want to see you sleep.

That was it—they were all sleepwalking.

It was already October. We were dangerously close to Halloween. So much had happened since I first came to Atlanta. Things I couldn’t even talk about. I was now working as a Research Assistant. Other things were changing.

It was Saturday night. A Saturday like no other. Electrical forces were buffeting the Cube. You could feel the electrical system about to go. They turned the music up in defiance of the inevitable. Explanation would require us to ignore the narrative events and concentrate on the physical causality.

–All this is happening for a reason.

–We need more time.

Thea was in a panic.

–Albert, has been useless.

She thought about her time with Bertie from the night before. Her dressed hugged her frame. Bertie worked her way along Thea’s breasts. Thea kissed her. She moved under the dress. Her hands on her flesh. The kiss became deeper. The tongue wanted its reply. Thea could feel the tingle inside.

–Who are we performing for?

–Ourselves!

–The Cube. They know what we are doing.

Thea's clothes seemed to slide off her. She held her arm to her forehead. Anguish and ecstasy.

Bertie was useless. But perfect for the occasion. Her limited talents would not permit her to ask for anything now.

–Shove your fist in me. Come on, boy!

Bertie like the fact that she could oblige. Thea didn't care. Bertie was an instrument of her pleasure.

–I thought that you didn't like boys.

–I'll take whoever can get me off. Bury yourself inside me. Eat me out like your hunger has never been satisfied before.

Would Thea pay for her excesses? Wasn't she ignoring the Cube at the moment that it needed her shelter.

Courtney strolled in with Tommy. She was in an elaborate costume. The bird of prey. She was ready to effect her designs. Tommy tried to oblige her. But he still looked like the vagrant that he was.

The scene was in preparation.

–Billy, you better get down here. There's going to be a scene.

–I'm trying to get ready as Don Giovanni. It's going to take some time.

–Pull that little twirp off your cock and jump in a cab.

–Count, you are off your rocker. The world will wait.

Would it? Could Billy have sent Courtney home for an early night. But she was enjoying the costume ball. The Count thought that he could head her off.

–Let me get you a drink.

Far off, Thea was casting off the love-making of the night before.

–Albert, I want to puke.

–It's already late, and Bertie is still in your bed.

–Tell that little tramp that she can hit the road. She's useless. She just lies there. I'm not going to lick her twat all night long. Get a strap-on bitch.

–Are you losing it?

–I've got the worst headache. It's not a hangover. Courtney is in the air.

–I hear that she's already down at the Cube.

–Maybe it's better if I stay home.

–You're playing Cinderella. They even have a coach to take you into the Cube.

–Have you talked to Audra? How's this magic thing doing.

–If she has any powers, they are at full blast.

–I'm already a bitch. It's only a short step to witch. Or is it vice versa.

–Sometimes I wish I was a man.

–You are a man.

- You know what I mean.
- Give me a sponge bath, and I'll feel better.
- You're never going to be better on this one.

Albert obliged her. He felt useless in her naked presence. His sexual confusions were accentuated. He rubbed her body with the sponge. When she wanted sexual stimulation, he obliged. He never touched her. It was the sponge. As she lay back in the water, her coos reminded him of a water nymph. Thea's desire was everywhere!

The Count feared that his party would be a failure. The place was full of costumed revelers. For him, they were the extras. Tommy was getting Courtney trashed. She saw a cute girl that she wanted to kiss. He had to hold her back.

- This is my story tonight.
- That's what you always say. Come upstairs and eat me out.

He wouldn't go that far. But they played their games while watching everyone else. The bird was being fed.

Billy made a grand entrance. It was Disco Mozart. The floor parted. He did his procession under a spotlight. Everyone marveled at the detail of the costume. The gold thread. The sparkle.

- Billy, you are here!
  - I will never leave.
- The music got more robust as the floor filled in again.
- Where is Thea.
  - We were impatient about you getting here.
  - I didn't want to ruin things.

The back door opened. The little carriage was pulled by a small horse.

- That's a pony.
- No, it's some boys in costume.

The girl in the glass slippers stepped out to everyone's cheers. The world would never be as harmonious for Thea. The electrical system went in overdrive just to outshine her light. The building shook all the way down to its cavernous basement.

- Who let the ghosts out for tonight.
- Go, girl.

Her face shone with her excitement. No one could have contained the extremes that she now felt.

- I need a drink to quiet me down.
- You're going to need more than that before the night is over.
- I need someone to lean on. Albert, be a dear and get me a drink and get me something to quiet me down–AMEN!

Albert was in waiting for the Queen. She was about to make a pronouncement, the world needed to be ready.

- Is that bitch Courtney here?
- What?

–Can't you hear me because of the music.

The two met face to face on the dance floor. There was another parting of the waters. Someone held Tommy back.

–This is my party? Who said that you could come here and ruin it.

–Did you bring your bucket of blood so that you could ruin my costume.

–You are already ruined. Every time you come here, you fuck a different person. Guy, girl. Everyone in your path.

–That never stopped you from going down on me.

–The order is reversed. First your boy Tommy and then you ate me out. You could do it again if I didn't want to catch a disease.

–I got the flu after being with you.

–At least, you got something for your troubles.

–Are you jealous of me.

–This is my place. I wouldn't bother.

–Your place. I thought that you weren't going to let it bother.

They needed drinks. Everyone needed an intermission. Anthea watched helplessly. She wished that it was her drama.

Audra was using every spell in her power. Where were the demons tonight?

–Ok, Cinderella, you've had your fun. The clock has struck twelve; now it's time to get in that carriage and head home.

–Don, you're being a nasty wizard. I want to have my fun.

–It's going to ruin it for the rest of us. I know that it's not really your fault.

–It's my night. I'm the guest of honor. I'm not leaving.

Billy's costume gave him no added authority. The Queen was not going to yield to the King tonight. Someone would be deposed.

–Off with your head.

–Someone please give me head.

–Amen!

Audra was in a panic. Whether it was her magic of the place, she knew that something terrible was going to happen.

–We have to get everyone out of here. I don't know if it's me. But you have to get them to turn the music off and get everyone to move outside,.

–It's not going to happen. Not now.

Too bad that no one listened to her warnings. The night was way beyond help. She was screaming in the darkness.

–You asked for this. I said that I had powers.

–You're exaggerating.

What was the exaggeration. They already saw sparks in the DJ booth. How the fire started, no one knew for sure. But it was a fire. There were so many people in there, it was lucky that no one was killed in a stampede for the door.

- Everyone’s out of there?
- Have you seen the flames?
- I don’t know what the fuck is happening.
- Does anyone
- This is the worst.
- My makeup is running.
- Get him home!
- Get her home!

The magic had been too much for the place.  
–I didn’t mean it to happen that way.

The Cube burned down! The fire trucks couldn’t do much to save the place. It seemed that an explosion added to the intensity of the fire.

- We got everyone out.
- Tommy was forlorn.
- Courtney didn’t make it!
- Thea was in a corner with Billy. She was distraught.
- I didn’t mean to hurt her. It was a game for the fans.
- We have nowhere to go.
- We’re homeless.

–Courtney’s dead.

They never discovered a body in the burnt out wreck. But she was missing. Tommy waited for days.

- Where is Courtney?
- Some of the club goers started to go to Jean-Luc’s Things would never be the same.