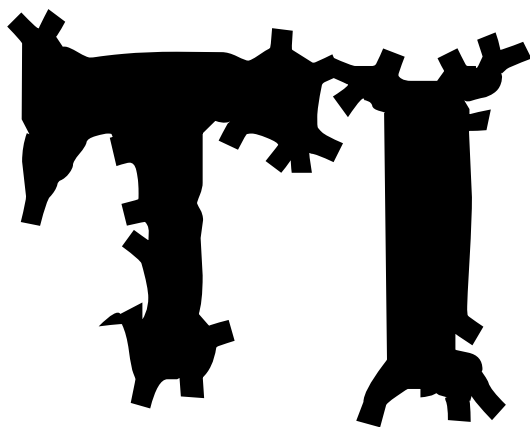
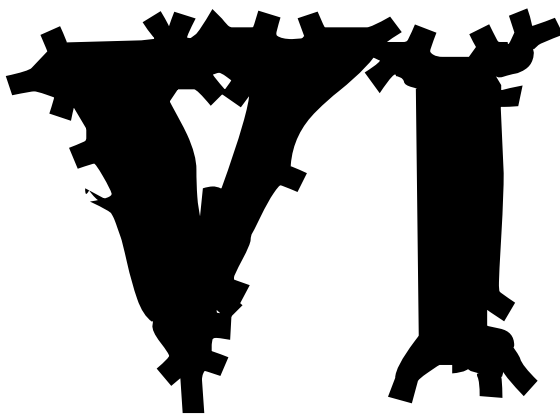


I *haven't* ~~DIED~~?

THE







ST

A L E X I S S E P T E M B E R A L L E N

THE ACTIVIST

I have decamped Los Angeles

A city carnivorous and bored enough to eat its own

And I, let's be honest, was *thriving*

The way a pathogen thrives in the bloodstream of a dying GOD
I became sleek in calcification

Testing people's masks became my recreational sport

Tap the façade, nod politely

curiosity sharpened into mischief

possibly sadism

No, no

I'll become cynical if I stay

For, it is irresistible, my desire

The slow, ceremonial task of poking inside them to see whether
their seams will give

a private,

petty experiment

can I, *maybe*, get their varnish to crack,

just a little?

And yes, maybe the moral clarity is thin it is

The urge to make *The Mask* falter is childish and monstrous in
equal measure

One knows One should not **pOkE tHe BeArS**

Yet One also knows, like an arsonist, that for Los Angeles, it is
only a *good time*

It is cruel

True and cruel

but

but

understand this

In Los Angeles, conversations don't begin, they *debut*

Each utterance

preening

a little linguistic thigh

gap

The Other (oh, poor radiant bastard across from anyone) is
merely a prop, a warm-blooded search result to assess

There is a volley of citations the way tennis pros lob balls for
beginners

Paris! God LATE CAPITALISM! Some Guy!

The rhythm is bleak Sedated?

There's laughter, the kind that sounds like it's being typed

Nobody listens

They just strategically pause long enough to insert their brilliance
into the bloodstream of the evening

Every "I know" lands like a forehand winner

Fucking glory

You can smell the ozone of burnt id

Desire has been routed through a frame of *comparison*

That grand deity of the educated class

Eros, poor sap, has been demoted

Connection outsourced to vocabulary

Authority laundered in a rinse cycle of irony and topical awareness

Then

if you measure

Oh darling,

if you're up to snuff

The Snuff!

In its most up!

The pivot

It

is

sweet

The scoreboard breaks

The crowd (that is, the other person) assesses **WORTH**

The *new* game is **warmth**

Praise is the currency now

It's so false
I can't imagine anything more real

LA is my first encounter with *nothingness*

Empty hedonism with a performance of brokenness,
sponsored of course

No

I love it so much All of it

The Seduction is calibration
Opinions shapeshift mid-sentence
There is adjustment in

posture,
syntax
humidity
^ (I swear)

It's not deceit, it's **evolution**

They keep eye contact
Breaking it might shatter the illusion

and then

who would they be?



Just another mammal with nothing smart to say

Without **FRICTION**,

without a true *Other*,

F

A

N

T

A

S

Y

S

T

E

P

s

IN

This is the best part

When fantasy reveals itself

delusion

The

Peeking

Underlying

FEAR

when the laundered freshness of authority wanes,
the scent

WHAT is that scent?

It smells

HORRIBLE

Like

A

A

Question?

culmination
end point
Scrutiny
Or worse

Real

Earnestness

The conversation airs out, they return slowly to their glass cage,
gesturing to see if you'll join

Come

Closer

Try

Me!

Touch

Me!

Do

You

See

Truth?

Reduce

Yourself

To

Nothing

Please,

God

Pleased God

They have rehearsed this
There is only three months left

Three months until you realize the myth of depth?

It
was
a

Performance

They will go on talking forever
immaculate chatterboxes of late civilization,
because silence, real silence

APRIL 1, 2025

Old God

I'll watch the light slide out of your eyes as it lands
When you realize your wholeness was scaffolding
I want you convinced you were good
Convinced you were known
Convinced you were safe
See you reduce yourself to nothingness
Forget your own name
Search for a self that isn't there
Nothing, but void

And I'll ask:
You *OK*?

Vero Eretico

Old **GOD**

Good dog

Me ne frego

Me ne frego



APRIL 7, 2025

Singing happy birthday to someone who probably won't
remember it

Then Charlie calls
Ol' Charlie
The poet laureate of poor timing

He's been writing for twelve hours, which is to say he's been
drunk for eleven and a half
It's 2:03 pm, the witching hour for those who mistake
dehydration for inspiration
He wants to send me pages

I say yes, of course
Always yes
Yes is the only currency we trust anymore

It is peaceful
Everything will be okay
A world temporarily under sedation

I watch the fountain spit water into the air
An argument with gravity

Plan a few harmless cybercrimes, digital equivalence of stealing
hubcaps off angels

SINS

I believe and do harmful things in my desire to see

Even pigeons know better

The girls laugh again, the sun keeps dripping, and I lick the cherry
stain off my thumb

Communion

Somewhere, Charlie is sending a wrong draft
Somewhere, the pigeons are winning

APRIL 11, 2025

There is something polite about flies in Paris

When the windows are left open and they catch a faint perfume
of decay from the bins, they drift in, make their introductions,
and hover near the ceiling *comme* tiny diplomats of rot

When they're not wanted, a single flick of a wrist sends them
packing No resentment, no drama

Enchanté

Bowing out with the grace of a doomed courtesan

The only rule of being a good guest is to be a complete non-issue

I find I like noticing them now

The little choreography of wings in warm air

Their mild insistence on existence

Sometimes I open my phone and scroll through the step counter
to see how long it takes before I stop wanting to die

Average steps per day: 28,304

Mostly by 8 AM

Eight months

2 hours of sleep a night

ER told me I'd crossed an event horizon into permanent brain damage

asked how I felt about that



Said it felt nice to have something permanent

APRIL 27, 2025

Conversation with Demon #1

Told through Oscillating Ears

MAY 2, 2025

Baphomet

He claws

And he hees and haws

He tells me I'm lucky

That **God** chose me

Eventually He'll consume my everything

Sometimes He'll point at me and whine

About how I might be better than Him as though someone is

keeping score

And sometimes He'll lose his mind if my face moves too fast

Scream at me

To sleep on the ground like

a

d

a

g

How dare I?

Quiet now

Women with personality disorders and molestation fetishes stand
around

hoping

To be plucked out of a crowd

To be told their maladjustment is

special

Men

Just sitting there

Staring

Bored

Waiting to be entertained

To mirror someone who can laugh

Who can still feel things

I loathe that I'm here

I loathe they exist

I loathe that I still don't feel home anywhere

And I fear I've seen too much

And felt so much

For things that were never real

That now I can't feel anything

I couldn't remain

Fernweh

Wah

Wah

wah

good



cunt



MAY 23, 2025

Freud has a glaring hole shaped like a twenty-five-year-old who'd assured me it wasn't a phase Given her return across the aisle, the unprompted declaration of sexuality should have made me take pause It was abnormal to proclaim one's desires In Perpetuum to a total stranger More so since we were already naked on a mid-afternoon weekday, but I wasn't really thinking

It'd been twelve weeks since various untimely deaths, and, by this time, I'd smoothly started to distance myself from acquaintances and friends Dr M (the psychiatrist du mois) postured with aching sincerity that I was hurting others to

alleviate pain She'd transgress into poignant speeches about the psychology of ex-communication, waxing poetic about the value of intimacy as though we lived in a time where a genuine human connection was common

When these began, my mind would wander I'd usually think about how much each lecture cost me, racking up each minute in dollar signs—annoyed since I wasn't coming to her for advice, just confirmation Honestly, if she, like every other actress turned therapist, weren't busy regurgitating Psycho-Analysis in iambic pentameter, they'd realize the exact opposite: if you seek isolation, you must avoid inflicting pain When you hurt people, they react You'll receive texts every couple of months with interminable poetic justifications, longing reunifications, or scathing retributions The text bubble that arrives is copy-pasted from their Notes App Edited Re-edited Looked over by some accomplice with only a third of the story from a single perspective And with a deep breath, they send If they're genuinely "in touch" with themselves, you'll get an email And it will be formatted Professionally If they're total philistines, it'll sign off with a "Warmest Regards"

I couldn't handle that

No way

Not anymore

The satisfaction of knowing I still mattered had turned into claustrophobia. When I saw their email addresses, I felt my rib cage fusing inwards as though my sternum may pop out, get nauseated, and begin to sweat just behind my ears. I'd think about the secretary crying and me waiting for her to finish so that I could tie up the loose ends of shocking deaths. Dot the I's. Cross the T's. Giving just enough information for thoughtful company-wide memos that were no doubt going to circulate.

Yes, human interaction was, at this point, most ardently avoided. No one had anything positive to say anyway; it was always that slight upward curl of their eyebrows, the drawn-out pronunciation of each "How are you?" fusing the question into a single word.

Instead, I sought indifference. My friendships would, eventually, die flavorlessly, silently, without fanfare. We'd never interact again, and, ipso facto, I'd lose any internal emotional attachment.

Once I succeeded, I wouldn't care when they died. I wouldn't have to pull out my black dress encapsulated in its zippered coffin with the defunct Barneys New York logo. I wouldn't scroll by their number in my phonebook and call them until their line had been disconnected. The "Doo-Doo-Doo we are sorry" AT&T's voice wouldn't blab into my ear when I only

wanted to hear Suraj say he'd "get back to you as soon as he can"

Say "me," not "you"

Yes, the plan, henceforth, was to avoid real connection
 Stability in loneliness is possible; variables are easier controlled
 When you invite in people, things become entropic—you can't
 control what people say or do You can't control their emotions
 You can't control the decibel at which they speak, and you can't
 control their eye ducts I didn't want to see anyone's tears Worse, I
 didn't want to see anyone uncomfortably squirm when the tears
 inevitably globbed out of my eyes

But, God is a total cunt if any religion ever created is to be
 trusted



We met on the street, the dog bewitched by a security
 guard who, for some reason, was juggling little cream-colored balls
 The dog's head was rotating in small circles trying to choose a ball
 to focus his energy He had started panting as such intellectual
 energy was physically taxing She'd approached the dog and me,
 asking if he was friendly and if she was allowed to pet him, before
 proceeding to dispel her life story Her voice was odd, which made
 her long-windedness quite palatable She had great skin I couldn't
 stop staring at it while she buzzed about She knew how to talk; it
 was endearing

She wore a patent leather coat with faux-fur blue
trimming that stretched up her forearms The coat would often
squeak— an auditory reaction to the fabric rubbing against itself
with even the slightest movement And as she continued speaking,
any tidbit she'd reveal, I'd respond with a simple: "Oh?" To which
she'd give backstory to the backstory

Oh? Squeak She talked with her hands Backstory

Oh? Squeak Backstory upon backstory

A litany of worrisome comments dispelled out of her
mouth Naturally, I didn't notice

After a half-hour, my nose fully chapped from the cold,
she asked:

"Would you want to go to your place?"

She tilted her head and smirked with only one side of her
mouth I should have said no I know I should have said no You
could tell she believed her transparent "ooh-la-la" allure came off
as natural Something to be fawned over as though her suggestion
was new and sexy and daring I knew I would become one more
story for her to tell as her books sat un-creased on her bookshelf
And though I now see the irony in the aforementioned statement,
it's not untrue

Still, I begged my body to feel excited by the inquiry

I hadn't felt much of anything for nearly eight months,

and the potential of feeling felt like a fascinating opportunity I looked at her coiffed curls, an Achilles heel of mine Nothing Not the smallest movement I would need stimulation only attainable from whatever was underneath her loud, squeaky coat I foggily rationalized it could make me cum, which would be nice I'd need to wipe off Manners are manners

For safety reasons, I looked at her nails
For sanity reasons, I looked for an undercut

“Sure,” I muttered



She kissed with far too much tongue and pushed excessive chalky and vaguely cinnamon-flavored saliva into my mouth The squeaking of her coat, mixed with “mmm” noises swelled, becoming comical as both of my hands were actually otherwise preoccupied When I pulled back, I saw her eyelids were halfway open, and her pupils were rolled into the back of her head She bit my lip, holding it, pulling it towards her as she reached into my coat to grab my tits I tried to speak but lacked the use of my lower lip, so what came out was: “Emmy gra eye heys” I dug around for the keys

She remarked on the location of my apartment: “This is a great neighborhood”

“Thanks,” I responded, as though I contributed to the geosocial value

Once a sliver of the door was open, the dog barreled through, his snowshoes still on, staining the carpet I nabbed him, tackling him to the ground I apologized profusely

She laughed it off

Maybe I could like her

I stood up, more determined than ever We began taking off each other’s clothes Wiping our noses, the after-shock of winter, and finding one another’s lips with celebratory giggles I inwardly congratulated my surgical precision: self-satisfied that I deftly unclipped her bra as though I don’t do it to myself every day She wore underwear that vaguely matched I’d worn a high-waisted thong that might have been sexy if they weren’t two sizes too large and the color of over-watered oatmeal

Slow down

Breathe

Inhale

I exhaled

Pulled back

Tried to stop disassociating

I finally looked at her skin, pushed her hair back, and traced my thumb on her bottom lip She calmed down I could finally see her breathing It wasn't a moment of particular note, but it was awareness She looked at me with wholeness, a stillness She didn't need permission to be appreciated by someone, just the opportunity

Then the delay-release hit, muting any earnestness or dexterity I started laughing, calling myself Fumblelina She cocked her head in confusion I stole the moment from her A moment she felt seen An antifogmatic assassination

Once between her legs, five minutes pass Maybe an hour Her hands grabbing my scalp, my hands keeping her hips down, hers pushing me in, her breath deepening, her wetness spread across my chin, her thighs tightening, then she said it:

“Mommy”



I have a penchant for psychiatrists who resemble my mother This was a disturbing discovery that I dare not dispel to a medical professional **God** forbid I be abandoned again and by someone who I pay

I first noticed this during a session some weeks back Dr M's dark-brown hair, appropriate clothing, and square cut nails were sitting before me, ankles crossed Her phone had been put on

Do Not Disturb, but the ringer went on full blast if a patient called twice in a row I'd yet to encounter the disturbance, save one fateful afternoon, Dr M held up one finger and said: "Can you excuse me? I need to check on this"

And

Walked

Out

The air pressure destabilized once she'd left, I'd clung to the chair as though she'd opened a plane's hatch mid-flight She'd triggered some irrational response, and I realized: Dr M is my mother's replica She walked back in, and I noticed how she smelled In our next session, I walked in on her plucking a single chin hair

I became acutely aware that I wanted her to like me I tried to make her laugh Sometimes I wanted to shock her as a test, but she'd be there steadfast I was accepted, unfeared, and for the mere price of an eighth of my week's pay, she'd never leave me I needed her, despite her lackluster performance as a medical professional

After recounting the Oedipal encounter in excessive detail, I watched her take notes, seemingly meditating on the story before dispelling her thoughts I got impatient "That's odd, right?" I said, needing confirmation

“She probably had a rough childhood”

Pissed off, I exhaled and smiled Unimpressed by the feedback, the kind that blames the parents for a child’s lack of agency is truly a pet peeve

Still

I’d instead go into debt than lose Dr M



With absolute sincerity, she said, “It’s not like this is a phase I’m just not ready to” She didn’t have to finish her statement It was congruent with my id As much as I wanted to want her, I didn’t I just didn’t care I’d ordered too big a meal and wasn’t even hungry

“I’m all good”

My eyes dilated, fixating on her pores; she had great skin We flubbed around looking for our respective underwear, getting dressed while facing away from one another I silently went to wash the rank smell off my face as she migrated to the couch

I don’t know what to do with stray cats, so I asked if she wanted tea

She accepted Oolong Of course, she asked for oolong I had to dig around my stash for the expensive tea, annoyed since I had been saving it for a special occasion that would never arrive I put on a kettle and played with the succulent in my kitchen

window, loosely feeling its leaves between my fingers I heard her rustling in the living room, having momentarily forgotten she was even there

Then she started to talk

Suddenly, the apartment didn't feel big enough for two people I went over to the window, pushing it up and moving my sill's magazine collection I'd come to leave a pack of super slims on the window for when my urges poked up Letting my leg dangle over my window's facade, I watched the goosebumps spread from my exposed kneecap, and I lit up The cold air mixed with tobacco burned my lungs, and though I tried to focus on the deliciousness of such discomfort, her monologue became distracting and progressively horrifying

Within the hour, I'd be privy to every adventure she'd ever logged onto her heavily-stamped passport

The endearingness faded

I peeled my head towards my couch, where she was perched The dog had meandered over, searching for scratches; he dropped his body to the ground and perched his head on the sofa She adjusted herself, cooing then ignoring him

Then

Just

There

I saw who she really was Or who I thought she was— I
was too zooted to differentiate

Initially, I'd been indifferent to the stories, but, in reality,
I was indifferent to her existence She was the type who relished
when people were concerned about her weight Her calculated
social media presence, of which 43% of her 10k-80k followers
were bought, would help catapult a career that didn't require real
creation After having met actual artists, her most profound
insecurity and rational part of her brain knew she didn't possess
any talent She'd cover this by associating, almost exclusively, with
pseudo-artistics and would equate bitingness to cleverness:
bitchiness to honesty She was hollow Predictable Most would say
stylish, but she was boring despite her adherence to whatever
du-jour was du-jouring Because—at the end of the day—she
believed she was deep and when things didn't materialize after
minimal effort, she'd think, with unwavering earnestness, that she
was robbed Her life's meaning was applause, and she never had
any authentic intention of improving the world This was despite
her Instagram stories which decried genocide or wildfires or
photoshop

It didn't matter if it was true It wasn't farfetched, and
that was what got to me

Seeing the glazed look in my eyes, she finally scoffed:

“Am I boring you?”

Of which is more an accusation than a question

I had probably said sixteen words, been asked only a single question throughout our entire interaction, and there'd been hardly a moment of silence It'd been a while since I'd spent time with someone I wasn't paying, and this interaction would have been taxing on my most benevolent and happiest of days My body language couldn't have made that more apparent Even so, such a question solidified the notion that she loved to hear herself speak and had some awareness she was repetitious

“You're not as mysterious as you'd like to think,” she'd blithely remark, as though such a statement would cut deeply, the verbal equivalent of a toddler stomping their foot I lit another, 'twas a two-cigarette in a-row type of encounter

Maybe her bored repugnance of me insinuated that I had been mysterious, which was flattering—the opposite desired effect Unbeknownst to her, I'm used to such rapid disillusionment There is a mystery to secrecy to apathy pipeline that becomes apparent given the length of your exposure to me I find it burdensome to relive or relay thoughts, events, or mindsets Especially since anytime I tell someone something, their response usually starts with: “Yeah, I” or “Well, when I”

I was also on chemically induced Jupiter

“I’m just exhausted,” I meek out, “and should probably get back to work”

To her, this was not a satisfactory answer She twirled the many bobbles on her hand—paid for by her father celebrating a life of B- existence And a succession of exasperated sighs proceeded in an almost machine-gun-like cadence She looked around the apartment then the ceiling, as though my ceiling was intriguing It’s not I look up What is she looking at? She taps her foot, looking for her next target, her next subject of conversation

She stood up, and her boney knees rubbed over to my desk, where she casually picked up my journal She fluttered it open, my heart stopping in witness to such audacity

Then it happened

She

She

She, who wouldn’t shut the fuck up, opened my journal and, from her upper lip, spewed a “Tuh”

Like a small horn

A laugh

At me

At my private, exclusively despondent thoughts
 I swung my leg around so that, despite not standing up,
 both my feet were flat on the floor Weightlifters call this the power
 stance, and I had begun to use it as a feeble attempt to trick my
 body into groundedness

“I’m gonna need you to put that down”

“Are you going to write about me in here?” she asked She
 thought she was cheeky

“Probably not” Lie

“Who’s Suraj?”

I froze

She rolled her eyes

“I’m gonna go”

And just as swiftly as she entered, she left She pulled on
 her coat, squeaking her way to the bi-colored, shit-stained
 hallway—the door shutting slowly due to the spring-tensioned
 closer the building had finally put in

And within that moment, a cellular-level stillness wafted
 over me, the type that accompanies the purest form of rage

I poured myself a glass of gin I’d duped myself for years
 that if it’s in a glass, it’s unproblematic



103L

550L

221L

34L

And then, like a little bitch, I started to cry

June 2, 2025

Mean Bitch

I was outside The dirt was compact
It hadn't rained in 80 days
The heat was so dry I'd stopped remembering what rain ever felt
like
My lungs were full of dust by now
The dogs didn't go outside anymore—except for one
That mean-ass bitch
Teats swinging
Ears chewed down to scars
The only one that still followed me
Or maybe I followed her
She liked me, I think

sometimes
she'd look at me
with those dry eyes,
protecting

Or

Watching

for a right moment

If I

ever

let
guard

my

down

truly

She licked the air

I started sobbing so hard I couldn't breathe

And then

I coughed up dirt
I coughed up tar
I coughed up old nails and rusty tires
I coughed up suffering
I coughed up pain
I coughed up pleasure
I coughed up shame
I coughed up my wholeness
I coughed up the lies
I coughed up my identity
And I eventually, just, like *died*

June 3, 2025

Conversation with Demon #5

3:49 AM

I'M IN THE VITRINA!

HELP!

CAN YOU HEAR?

I'M IN THE VITRINA!

YOU!

STOPPING TO STARE!

HELLO?

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

I'M IN THE VITRINA!

I'm

in

The

In the

VITRINA

I'm

in

Its so **WARM**

In
The vitrina

I m In the vitrina
feel like home

oxygen

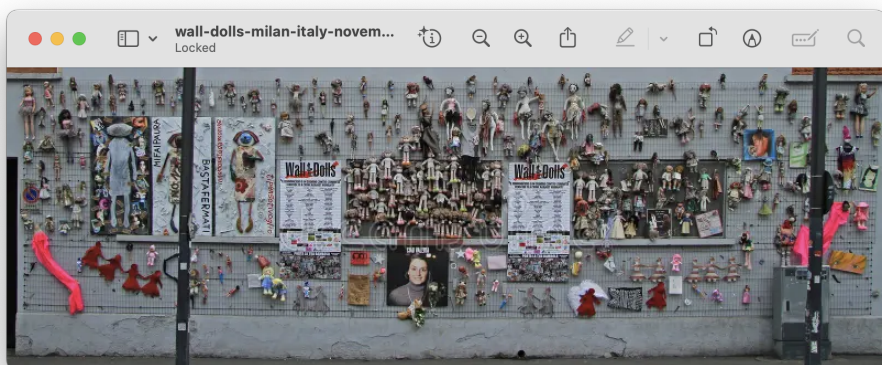
nitrogen?

Oh

Wow

In the

Vitrina

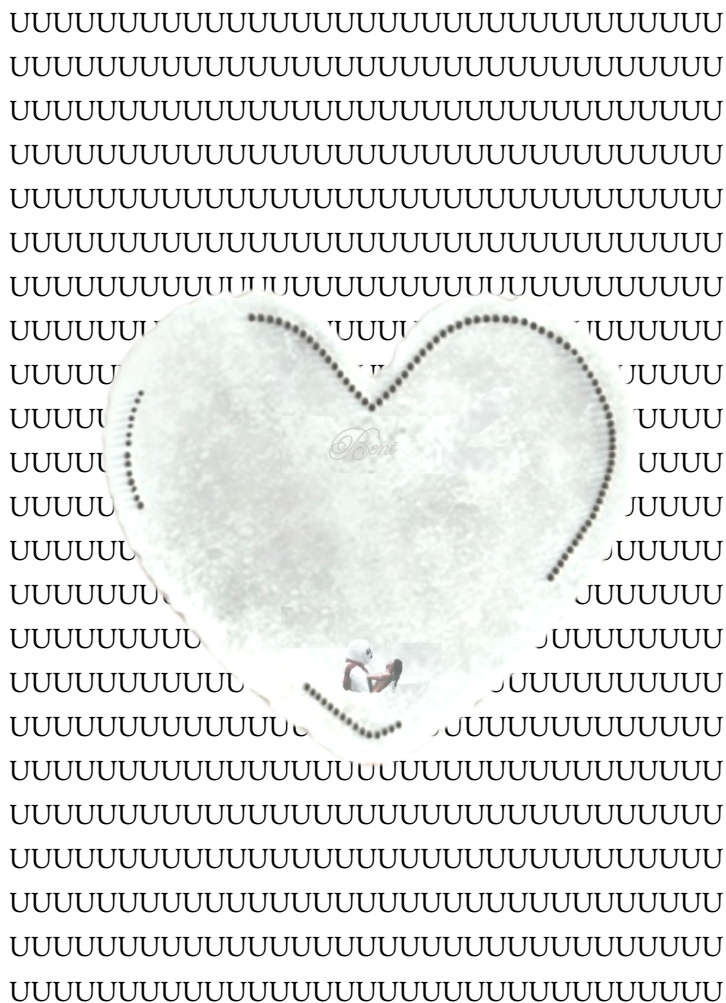


I want to see

June 7, 2025

Introduction to Conversation #11 with Demon

[illegible]





it's going to be a real precarious dance with some psychopaths

JULY 7, 2025

GENERATED



The first time Annie went to work, she was six years old and wearing a purple sweatshirt that said *DREAM BIG* in cracked yellow vinyl. Her mother said she looked like a raisin. Annie didn't know if that was good or bad, so she said thank you.

They lived in a single-room trailer behind the prison. The air always smelled like meat left too long on a grill, even though nobody nearby could afford a grill. The warden gave them a discount on rent because her mother never complained, not even when the lights flickered or when the rats started nesting outside.

The rats were GOD'S little testers, her mother said, and when they appeared, it meant you were being watched closely for your reaction

Annie liked the rats They didn't ask questions
Her mother worked in the laundry room, washing sheets
the color of raw chicken

"They're not dirty," she explained to Annie "Just stained by the soul"

That made sense to Annie She'd seen souls before, small
fogs that hovered around people's mouths when they were sad

The warden had a round head and said Annie had "a good attitude" and "the right energy for the place" That was how she got the job to carry a small tin bucket of soap to the prisoners, one bar each

The men liked her They called her *Little Nurse* or *Baby Angel* They had tattoos that looked like diseases One of them told her he'd once eaten a whole pigeon raw

"Tasted like heaven," he said, and winked His breath smelled like wet pennies

She learned their rhythms They liked to cry around
lunchtime They liked to laugh at night In the mornings, they
stared into nothing, as though waiting for permission to exist
again

Annie was the permission

When she gave them soap, they thanked her as if she were delivering news from **God** Sometimes they tried to touch her hair through the bars

“Soft,” they’d say “You’re soft Don’t let them make you hard” She didn’t know who *they* were, but she nodded solemnly, as if she did

At home, her mother drank from a coffee mug that said *#1 MOM* It was filled with something clear and sharp that made her cheeks go red

“You’re lucky,” she’d say, leaning back in her chair “Most kids don’t get to see the world so early You’ll be wise”

Annie nodded

She didn’t want to be wise, but she liked the sound of being

The prison had a smell that never washed off Metal, mildew, bleach, and something sweeter underneath, like an animal trying to die politely Annie started to dream of it The smell seeped into her sleep, curling under the door of her mind In the dreams, the prisoners were smaller, like dolls, and they lived inside her stomach, whispering prayers that sounded like recipes for self-destruction Sometimes she woke up with her mouth open, tasting dust Sometimes she woke laughing

When the new prisoner arrived, she noticed him right away He didn’t look like the others His face was clean, almost pretty He was thin in a way that looked chosen His eyes were the same gray as the soap

When she handed him a bar, he just held it in his palm,
staring at it “You shouldn’t be here,” he said

“Neither should you,” she said back

He smiled “I was six once too”

“Everyone was”

He leaned in close to the bars, and she could smell his
breath, cleaner than anyone she’d ever met

“Not everyone stays there,” he said

That night, Annie asked her mother what happens to
people who never grow up Her mother said, “They rot cute”
Then she laughed until she coughed

Days passed The man in cell 21 stopped eating The
guards said he was “losing it”

Annie thought maybe he was finding it

When she brought him his soap one morning, he was
sitting on the floor with his knees pulled to his chest

“You ever try to wash something that won’t come off?”
he asked

Annie thought of her hands They always smelled faintly
of bleach and iron, no matter how many times she rinsed them

“Yeah,” she said

He nodded slowly, like she’d said something profound
Then he took the soap from her, bit into it, and smiled

After that, she didn’t see him again His cell was empty,
except for a pile of white feathers

“He strangled himself with the bedsheet,” a guard told
her

But Annie knew better She'd seen things leave bodies
before and whatever he was, it had escaped politely

The prisoners got quieter after that They'd take their
soap without speaking, some crying silently Annie noticed they
began washing more, rubbing at their skin until it came off in the
sheets The smell in the halls grew sharper

Her mother didn't notice Her mother had stopped
noticing much of anything

At night, Annie would lie awake She imagined the prison
as a living thing, sighing through its metal ribs, digesting everyone
inside

Sometimes she thought it was digesting her too, from the
outside in

When she turned seven, the warden threw her a party It
was in the break room The cake was white with green frosting
that said *CONGRATULATIONS ANNIE!*

She didn't know what for

The warden gave her a pink backpack with a cartoon
rabbit on it

"For school," he said

But she didn't go to school anymore After the party, she
went to the cells as usual The prisoners were quiet, watching her
like she was a ghost

One of them whispered, "You smell like him"

She didn't ask who She already knew

At cell 21, she found a bar of soap carved into the shape
of a heart When she picked it up, it crumbled in her hand The

smell was unbearable

That night, she told her mother she didn't want to work
anymore Her mother laughed

"We all work, sweetheart," she said "Even when we stop
showing up"

Annie dreamed of water that wouldn't rise
Of rats in little white uniforms

When she woke, she found her hands sticky and white
The sheets smelled like the laundry room Her mother was gone
The warden came knocking later that morning

"Your mother didn't come in," he said "We'll need you to
fill in for her today"

Annie nodded She didn't feel like a child anymore, but
she didn't feel grown either

She put on her raincoat and went to work
The prisoners bowed their heads when she passed
Some began to hum

And somewhere deep in the pipes, something began to laugh

A U T H O R ' S N O T E

For eight months, I believed I was becoming enlightened

humiliating

Believing I was engaged in some rare metaphysical correspondence

ascetic for consciousness

snorting fragments of ontology like horse tranquilizers

*alleged*ly,

I was just dying

stupidly

a pressure in the skull that felt
intentional, a mischievous presence had found
my nervous system and was tapping out obscene
Morse code from behind my eyes

I thought, *perhaps*, it was:

an emissary from the void

It wasn't (?)

Is what **THEY** tell me

Apparently

It was a lump of tissue blooming

purposeless

smug

When I slept, it pressed on wrong buttons

My body learned to panic as a language

I woke up hyperventilating, mucus everywhere, gasping like a
person in the wrong century, convinced I had glimpsed

the architecture

therefore **deception** itself

And then I *saw* it

A figure at the foot of the bed

Me,

but spoiled

Covered in tar

Hairy?

Black eyes

No teeth save for a long yellow one Feral

The demon

Not a Jungian exercise in imagination

It stood there

smiling?

I knew *It* immediately

An idiot with a library card,

I tried to philosophize my way out

I summoned Land Bataille Po Debord *God*

I stitched their voices together into a sermon and preached to my
own terror

Demon didn't care

It wasn't a metaphor

It was just breathing

constantly

waiting for me to stop thinking so it could eat

The months crawled by half

conscious

I was certain I was being initiated into some secret order

the Church of Absolute Suffering

I wrote notes on my phone that read like psalms from a lobotomy ward

When the pain became too strange to romanticize,

they finally sedated me

Cut me open

Found the thing

A HA!

a tumor

How banal

They congratulated themselves for saving my life

I nodded politely, like a woman who'd just been told **God** was
an

error

You don't hallucinate with that much physical authority

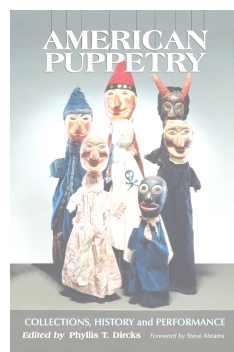
I'm a creative person,

SURE

that kind of horror requires energy,

I wonder now

Constantly



Incredibly lubricated polemic to launch a new art movement

Notes app

3 days before surgery

NBOT

ERLC 

galleries thinning like sick animals deaths underreported,

almost polite

everyone is tired

art no longer offers escape let alone confrontation

It offers content

And content is a polite synonym for *nothing*

exhaustion feels not incidental,

structural

consequence of a metaphysics peddled by institutions and artists
alike

a metaphysics of *narcissism*

mistaken for **LIBERATION**

art has made narcissism its dominant gesture

aestheticizing identity

then moralizing it

Told to look inward

We did so with the fervor of someone
masturbating in front of a mirror

We were told trauma was political

self-styling was radical

This was supposed to resistance

Art stopped finding and *began making statements*

RESULT:

work that confuses

exposure with honesty

autobiography with *insight*

Narcissism, sold as empowerment

What is offered is not spirit

its simulation:

a performance of transcendence

gesture of communion without the substance of it

The gesture of

GENIUS

Narcissists live in pursuit of that false attainment

lie

Almost as though

It's not vanity

It's metaphysical ***ERROR***

They refuse lack

They refuse dependence

They reject what cannot be possessed

therefore killing the very conditions that make it possible

They're in revolt

The narcissist flees the confrontation with Being

Now I Find Them

The many antichrists among us

Hiding

In the noise of publicness

Denying Death

by aestheticizing themselves into caricature

Authenticity would demand they suffer

They choose branding

A one-way ticket to rationalization and a washed look in their eye
as they settle into their narratives as though they're

organic

It is the very opposite of *God*, of eroticism

Gasp though

Today's art, shaped by theory yet emptied of thought

encourages this

RESULT:

essentialism disguised as radicality

Artists are told their very existence is *content*

The world applauds Nothing happens

we continue in this circle

Laughing

~~FORGETTING~~

Revolting

culture

moral authority of **whatever** dujours

curators deploy artists to express their own *panic*

exhibitions become exercises in controlled hysteria

result:

a scene saturated with semiotics of visibility
devoid of vision

no mystery in this art no risk

everything

justified by personal narrative

rendered inert through over-explanation

no *Vera Eretica*

5 hours later...

artist who remains

inside

begins to mistake reflection for revelation

slow infection of a psyche by oneself

what was once eros becomes entrapment

a conversation with an unconscious becomes a monologue

“The more a man lays stress on his individuality, the more he tends to shut himself off from the collective, until at last he finds himself locked in his own prison”

this prison is peculiarly quiet

the absence of relationship

deprived of opposition, feeds upon itself

begins to eat its own image

spiritual malnutrition
cannibalization of the imagination
dressed up as authenticity

Genuine creation depends on tension

living dialogue between known and unknown

*“The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends,
but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him”*

cannot mistake participation for possession

trying to seize what should pass through

narcissistic artist identifies with the source itself

confuse **GOOD** with their own reflection

worship what should have been mediated

the sickness of the age

cult of interiority without transcendence

self-expression without sacrifice

becoming curator of our own image

endlessly refining the mirror until there is nothing left to reflect

task, then,

is not to escape inward

but to return outward

bearing form

to convert interior revelation into

offering

reestablish circulation

work of art is a portal through which the unconscious speaks in symbols
older than artist
truer than biography

forget this is to die in one's own reflection

relinquishing ownership of one's interior does the artist become "the
servant of the psychic process"

serve that process is the only rebellion left against the culture of the
closed self

porous creatures

to speak of the self as if it were contained is a modern superstition

hygienic error

boundaries

thought

sensation

is the trace of something that has

passed through

What is discovered there is a living *atmosphere*

which saturates every psyche

The collective unconscious and the *spiritual realm* are one continuous

ecology

the invisible medium in which meaning and force circulate

To deny that permeability is to invite **POSSESSION**

For evil, too, moves through this field

not an invention of theology

when flow turns to **EXTRACTION**

relation becomes **CONSUMPTION**

sacred and accursed are the same current

merely split by intention

energy which does not return to the whole becomes monstrous

evil merely arises when circulation is interrupted

world is a turbulent assembly of forces

none neutral

live in such a world is to accept that one's skin is not a wall

things pass through:

desires, images, moods, spirits, **toxins**, systems



self is a weather system shaped by currents it cannot author

old dualisms collapse
psyche and world
natural and supernatural

communication is to risk contamination and be altered by what one
receives

trembling openness

continually breached, continually undone, continually made and
unmade

And if evil exists, it is precisely here

in the refusal to acknowledge that passage

The self that seeks to be

self-contained

becomes sterile

The open self accepts the danger of porosity
in letting the world through
we might let darkness through as well

That is the risk of being alive



mins later.....

artist who understands ceases to ask whether their work is good or evil
and instead asks:

what is moving through me, and what will it do once released?

world does not need our purity

Purity is not the task

artist must never aspire to be clean

seeking purity is to exile oneself from the field of relation

mistake sterility for sanctity

The world does not need purified beings.

Discipline is the means by which the porous self survives contact

calibrating the capacity to remain within the current without being
carried off by it

permeable ones who can remain open without being consumed

disciplined artist do not repress the voices that move through them

learn to hear without obeying

listen without being overtaken

Evil whispers most clearly to those who have built the quiet necessary to
perceive it

Discipline is quiet

stills the psychic noise

stillness, the artist can see within the unseen without collapsing into it

purity is to act from fear of contamination

discipline is to act from trust in one's permeability

discipline allows the artist to step in and out of the collective
unconscious deliberately, to edit what emerges, to translate and transmit

But

without that rhythm of entrance and withdrawal

artist risks dissolving into navel-gazing

mistaking

chaos for inspiration

It is ongoing maintenance of the membrane that keeps circulation
possible

True discipline is therefore erotic

not punitive

It restores proportion between what enters and what leaves, between
what is received and what is offered

7

SCHISM Later...

artist who no longer feels the current

mistake **themselves** for its source

sweetest poison: the illusion of being chosen

temptation is the secret pleasure of transgression

brush against the sacred is ecstasy

imagine that voltage *belongs* to you?

delirium

moment the current is personalized sacred curdles into sovereignty

artist begins to feed on own divinity

god complex

a counterfeit transcendence

masquerades as illumination and thrives on isolation

You are the source

It feels like power precisely because it dissolves *relation*

the more one identifies
the less one can hear it
the individual becomes possessed
instead of serving as interpreter
resulting in tyranny
both inward and outward

mistakes domination for creation

Drunk on their own exception, they become priests of private religion

What once was offering becomes idolatry

2 hours later...•••

yet, the seduction is immense

feeling charged with *divinity*

sense the universe coming toward one's gesture

This is the narcotic of creation



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