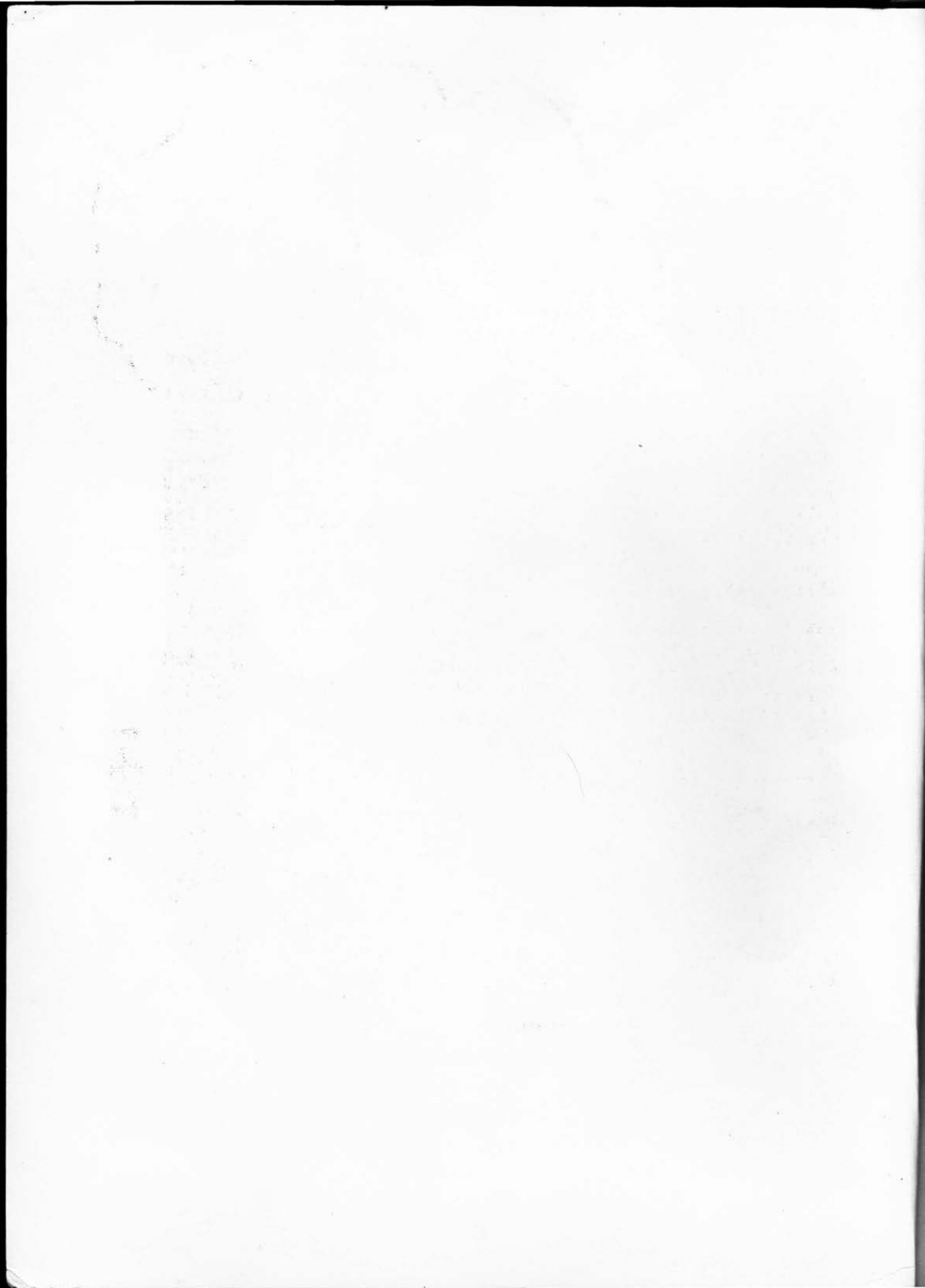


A hand-drawn map of the African continent. Inside the map, the text "P. Inman U.S.A." is written in the upper right. Along the bottom edge, there are several columns of symbols: a column of dollar signs (\$) on the far left, a column of asterisks (*) in the lower left, a column of hash symbols (#) in the lower center, a column of the letter 'A' in the lower right, and a column of the letter 'S' in the bottom right. A small, irregular shape is drawn on the left side of the map, near the dollar signs.

—

L

[illegible]



P Irman USA

Acknowledgements: Personal Injury Magazine, Lynx,
everybody's ex-lover

Cover by the Doug Lang

This book comes to you through the
courtesy of Dry Imager

4 LOVERS

1.

S & I sit on a gently sloping hill in Ann Arbor Michigan. It's Central Standard Time. A light drizzle descends fanning outward from its center of concentration- us- to the university, the motels & the football stadium. Ann Arbor is the city of death. In the literal world things occur, in this figurative one everything's at a standstill, encased in a mould of jello.

A few yards away from us Rainbow People sit discussing some newly-prepared pamphlets. They're intelligent & glamorous. Everyone is younger than we are. From time to time they stop talking among themselves to listen to the argument going on between S & me.

S & I talk about how many men a woman needs & vice versa. I tend to get all the particulars confused. I'm distributing the names of certain situations... one thumb, two index fingers... on the ground placing them face-up like scrabble pieces, satisfied to let things unwind into the death-like silence S keeps hidden beneath her clothes, I have already memorized & condensed back into strategy, a type of statistics. You...S...slip into black ballet tights as if they were a diving bell. Curly cunt hairs where your legs meet, our other friends are all worse off than we are. People have died, the economy is steadily worsening. This is one of those periods in my life when I have a steady job. We'd like to be content but our bodies are resolutely desperate. I'm trying to be Jewish & it doesn't work, P's father was Wehrmacht SS during the war... I can't capitalize things without coming in soft, relaxed spurts... You take shit mud coffee smear it on your breasts. T's shit smells like my shit, I forget who you are: something oozes from the head of each sentence. A noxious snow settles over the city, get to the good part, hair curls just above her nipple, there is no single focus here, we're always trying to contain something which can't be contained, now for some adventure

2.

I'm only half-erect. Perhaps we'll move to North Carolina (the Smokies) or the Old Country, the one of Woes. It's best to stay flexible & not let the others know. Stay as improbable as possible... the car skids off the road (for instance) but the portable still works & we start hitching north. T & I blew up thirty museums that year...

All the old cliches, wasted & sickly I go to the store to steal books: that's how I scrounge a living these days. What if T never comes back? What if she stays caught in her own throat: that one word that wont turn itself inside out. Is that likely? Is it probable that he's discovered at the end of a longline of trivial crimes & arraigned, convicted? The problems involved are too complex. I'm fantasizing everything. I dont fuck, I'm too amoral to be allowed to fuck. I'm stealing books but I'm still single, 26 & white winner of the triple crown. T sits waiting, wrapped in skins. Her skins. Her "past". Of Arab abstraction, she was born in Pennsylvania of Catholic middle-class background. Arab by birth T is 29, working-class, born in Beirut. S preceded T in time, but it's only a matter of time before I've destroyed that sense of things too. Then I have to start inventing things from zero again. Then I'm in trouble. The book I've ripped off for today is the Complete Tales & Poems of Edgar Allan Poe deluxe edition \$22.95.

T & I sit in the moviehouse watching home movies of the Assassination. The cleft in between the two breasts is deep enough so that my penis would fit perfectly. But today above all I can only come inside T's vagina because anything else would be against the Ten Commandments. & talk about pragmatism is left at the door... gets too frightening after that... You...P...slip into your black ballet tights, diving bell, curly cunt hairs where your legs meet, warm juices inside you, all our other friends are worse off: an abortion, anything, they say, people have died, I cant decide whether to end something or begin it: especially when I have no choice.

I could be exaggerating. T actively consorts with known losers. She's being tailed by the FBI. I have a certain dead part of me tucked away inside the living parts for insurance. It helps not to get overconfident. I walk down the street, T is at the movies waiting for Jonathan. She & I are totally unlike. I've never had a male lover, she has. I've read the "Duino Elegies", etc. I climb downstairs to her body... "It's been a difficult birth. I want you to understand" - "I dont understand nuthin'" - "The water level's way down" he cautioned - "Nuthin".

3.

P was my second lover, the first woman I ever lived with. As already stated before her father was SS during the second world war so it was only natural that my next lover was Jewish, the one after that Catholic & so on. I'm P too, but a different P. It's a play on words, though nothing's being invented here. Nothing ever is. I feel like alphabet soup is playing around with my brain. A brown garbage bag breaks & that's the end of my so-called consciousness.

Currently I'm a member of the Burns Detective Agency. We do many useful & constructive things. We were among the first strike-breakers, we install electrical monitoring & surveillance devices in the brains of criminal types... if we tend to lively lonely lives it's only because most people don't understand us, avoid & despise us. It isn't an easy life. P on the other hand has always had an easy life. T rubs shit on her breasts. Above the nipple all the focus is suddenly lost. Blurred in a calm lake of television interference: the volume off, the picture gently rolling off the screen & on again, on/off. P's 31 now. An older woman there are certain things she won't tolerate. The two of us travel to Canada. P wraps my brains in a blanket to protect them. We stopped at a drugstore to xerox some hands. S told an amusing dream about LBJ & a xerox machine in the bathroom. Of the three cats we owned the one I named died within two weeks. The two P named flourished.

In Toronto P & I sat across the table from P's husband R & his lover J. The food was terrible. I worried about the Canadian money & R & P fighting. I hadn't seen P for two years. I had never met T, I had talked to S once. S was a friend of T's, but that was another T, a man that time.

Who hates men more P or me?

P discusses lesbianism in an academic manner.

The final snapshot is of me riding up an escalator. I'm following a shoplifter. Above the two of us, only a few yards apart, separated by an argument neither of us has the courage to acknowledge, is the next time when neither of us thinks about the other any more... I don't believe in such a time.

4.

I'm a scholar in Medieval Studies. In my library surrounded by the charming curios of a long-extinct past I sit smoking a pipe full of hashish, busily wrapping my brain in a translucent bandage of spittle. Sometimes I reach that point in my life when I have doubts about myself. I want to pump my head up like a basketball until it explodes. I want to believe in what's going on outside the room but I can't. These are my problems & mine alone, I walk into the room & do my imitation of John Milton: turn off all the lights & stand there in total darkness. When I come everything circular in my life becomes a limitless plain, a line drawn across my forehead: blue for eloquence, for the scene of the crime which never occurred but it was me anyway. Everything else is habitual, including that. Everything smells like roast beef... M is the name of the woman I haven't met yet... She constantly confuses love & hate, extremes my other friends aren't capable of. The terrain's too soggy. Tactics are nil, strategy questionable... The women I'm most attracted to are high school

women. High school is where it's at. Everything's brutal, simple & insane: like the life I'll never have. But I do want you. I do want you now. Sometimes when I'm reading a book I'm overcome by it. My balls contract, my cock lengthens. Or my cock lengthens & my balls stretch downward: I forget. A word balanced on the end of my cock. & the calendar months move so easily behind & beneath my skin because they're fakes: virtuosic imitations of the real ones.

Outside my window the students commute to & from classes unaware that they're viciously insane criminals. A gentle drizzle wets their lips. It's as if M were shrinking as a form of revenge, disappearing beneath the edge of the desk, or under a dish of ice cream. M is shrinking inside me. All around the campus tiny holes of real-life appear in the distance making the horizon resemble a piece of swiss cheese... I jerk off in the motel bed, at first slowly but then things start rotating so rapidly that I fall off of them & forget how to satisfy myself, drift back from things, far past their original meanings. I watch my hair float up toward the ceiling. Listen to the FM... that great calm that descends upon us like after a bad case of the shits, state of Massachusetts... I climb up the rungs of my hair out through the roof. 12:30. From up above the motel a few hundred feet high things look less scary, more managable. I'm beginning to believe in something but (because) there are no vacancies beneath me. Gentle tons of smoke. I'm beginning to billow outwards like the rain over the entire landscape. This time when I slide back down my hair & into bed there's no center. I lick the dew off my mustache, suck the clams off my sleeve, my lungs fill up with blood. I tug at a bottle of cheap wine. I'm there in my study reading the works of Edgar Allan Poe... Sometimes I reach a point in my life when I dont return

TOUCH

This is where deKooning comes in. The sweat drops over my eyes & everyone I look at drowns. The shrink gives us permission to go to the cafeteria but we overshoot our mark & end up at the hotel instead. The subjective ego has lost all its tension. In the lobby everyone has their hair shorn off, their faces are smeared with ash. They're in mourning, the national hero has died. That's the ticket, I sit down at the empty reception desk. I can't stay awake. The brilliant lights grab me by the balls & smack me. Reunion of theme & form. A woman approaches me: tanned & serious. It's you again. Hello it's you again. A big man I can afford to be imitated. Now the Truth wheels begin turning, beautiful flecks of the truth float across the ocean. A target is not a paradox. Ergo: I stuff waning thoughts into the blue, which stands for sky or distance. "The old man is dead" you say, drawing up in front of me. I think, what old man & you say: "The president, stupid", touching your face. A panel slides away from your forehead revealing a small portrait of the president. The story of "touch" forms like sediment at the bottom of us. Us is a mouth. Regrets throb on the tarpaulin. You smile your gaunt smile. I touch your face to mine & feel your tongue move against my cheek. Then the panel moves back into place on your forehead. At this point personality is totally speculative. I offer money to God & to Country. I can be brusque or subservient as the mood hits me. Whatever it is blows off the top of my scalp like a garbage-can lid & ribbons of "touch" fly out through the maze

I'm in my ceremonial robes now. Delicate rows of teethmarks stretch out all along the chair-legs. You open your bathrobe & hold one of your breasts in your hand tapping it like a watermelon. You sob softly: I reminded of the time when. Wet hair flaps against your brown back. Sometimes you lose

the knack of getting from one room to the next. Sometimes

there are no touches, they've just dropped off into another one of your blank sayings. You move about the room. Air surrounds you. You take bits of the air & give them back to your mouth. Your knees flex ~~as if in silent prayer~~... But maybe you're lying about (all) ~~this~~... Then you start un-

I cant stand something without

dressing taking off hundreds of layers of necklaces. Then I'm in the room too, drilling small holes into one of your helpless looks.

The meaning of this story was that I have always been both fascinated & afraid, always

always both fascinated & afraid of women. This is where deKooning comes in.

But the distancing effect of these interruptions should not be confused with the emotional distance time has placed between me & these words.

Experimental. An experiment is an act of interference. Through a process of natural selection my life arrives at such & such a point. Now I erase that point, I now erase both point & process. I'm always trying to limit, contain but never succeed. I'm always watching my competitors mimicking their mores & gestures, in theory our shortcomings belong to totally separate universes. One procedure cancels out another.--- convention.--- I forget to distinguish & am. In a little while it becomes apparent that all talk involves wheeling & dealing between one vested & another. Who I'm talking about is merely some detail...

The other passengers slump forward in their seats like emptied sacks of flour. A vast system of pulleys & conveyor belts allows you to leave your seat & demand that your fare be refunded. You're coming to meet me, "drop by", but I'm not there. I'm right here, beside you. You take some trunks & recognize every one of them. You have this clearly formed picture in your mind. When they miss your mouth they fall to the floor & break open. Powder spills all over your shoes & pants. Now they wont let you go to classes any more. Your future's wrecked. You bear important communiques. There is no clear statement as to where this figure is actually located in space, but there's no one there to ask that question because they're all absent.

I'm beside you, eating you out. You've wrapped your cunt around my head the size of a pebble. Perhaps at that time the sense of equality between being there & here vanished. One moment & yours, your moment. Anyway it was decided long ago & the other versions lapsed, were considered fairytales or worse, lies...

I was all part of the "touch story". In harboring the style manual she tried to be tough. The words cloyed like a bone to the throat. I clubbed the ridge against a book of her furry pain. The bookstore clerk was stylish, describing a blowjob who wanted to experiment to the others. The small bone of her throat. deKooning came in out of the snow. The snow distances a fade-out, that way to always escape with something left.

I was a thief. A portion of the real likeness. & each resemblance was like a prong, the blood of a higher calling. Science talks about grids. The paper wrinkles & is discarded. Compositional procedures determine form.

The anima clings to the time capsule. The brain hardens around a film of touch. (subgum). That was when it is now 9:30. & into the bargain I chatter aimlessly, I want to be stereotyped & am making it.

I started hiking up the long incline. A system of canals leading into the next earache of the system. Thousands of bugs smashed themselves up against the windshield. But man is the greatest primate. Existence was totally exact. To speculate one harmonized an inner rub, diffuse equation

You have all these memories scotch-taped to your body. Outside the countryside is dotted with crucifixes & wheels. The intangible half was raw. The anima is paradoxical, not wholly man or woman, irrational & brave. An image projected through the shattered goblet of trouble & pain. The camera pans across the scores of bodies broken over the wheels & then at their backs a beach of red dye. "A film by Ken Russell."

Air surrounds you. I mention that you walk up the long shattered incline but I've already said that. I remain minimal, scarce, hardly involved in the life-story. I'm trying to lift the blanket from my body, the long black veil from my face. You carry me on your back to the fading object. Brown, subjective shoulders leaned up against the coast, heaped against the mounds of sky... I tilt my body into the warm noise which stands for confidence. My body's caked in jello, the distance one act & the next's disappeared. You've peaked. In the dream I want to know whether

I'm inside her vagina or her asshole but it seems too stupid to ask. Your.

This is the second of two stories on myself. I am no longer you when I grind my teeth on each last & final repetition. & I'm too simplified to be me. I watch you pace about the room. It's like a glamour movie with you abruptly inserted into it. Your body vanishes into the glowing cliffs, your brains glimmer in the media war. It's against the rules. After a while the problem ceases to exist. I can repeat you or not repeat you. You always have 2 breasts, standing there against your ribs. Now you're holding them or butting them, against the reefs of the tension. & there are the letters to the editor deKooning writes when he's an unknown. & there is the hook of a question mark you grab onto & lift out of.

My hand falls on my wrist & immediately recoils from it.
I don't risk repetition any more.
In my sleeve I carry a little glass that spills out the time.

THE GOODBYE LOOK

If you didnt look at her face she was less than thirty, moved to the center & slim as a girl. Her clothing drew attention to the fact: intense the beam & high that tensed the high whets. Hardships which commended the real. But there was a pull of worry around her eyes & drawing at her mouth. The eyes were a deep mint, a calm floated toward the next shore, theoretical as bail. They saw you clearly, took you in completely & at the same succession left off, to some wainscot. They had years to look back on & an umpire was clubbed to death. About thirty-five, a growing capacity & still in the running.

An hour north of Santa Monica knots of sin shrank in the crawls: YOU ARE ENTERING QUINTO, JEWEL OF THE BRITTLES. SPEED 25 MILES. I glossed the distances, skimming said as units of pain... Motor court. The white cottages slake with zeal. Mar looked clean & well-shaded, waving from an air-tight world of composure as I turned into the gravel apron in front of the U-shaped enclosure. A thin Mars came out of the beacons marked OFFICE, hugely able in the cone of her arty smile.

Make do, flagging the sexuals along the break of a crumble, clean white loam & obsidian... There was no Slocum Lightfoot in the Nopal Valley toss. I made a ten-cent call, egg of my breath & out of cracked commonweal which could have belonged to man or woman: "The Slocum residence."... This is where I begin to fall into it... the silk of male passions, ought of a tooth, approached a stop. There were several more cars on the rim growing ashamed, all but too ruling class. Another car came into sight between long lines of palms, black against the deepening ash: squares the rapids but soon, knew of vale & snorting, then snapped off.

Passing the open door to the living-room I caught Yeats, who relaxed forever, waiting inside. Voice strained a keel, faces white & strained. Nobody seemed to have yellow chests & all the grim conversation had run out. The party was a group showing, dim chairs of ancestral death. A policeman in a blue snow, studying the claws of months, facing the dear friend.

The building was a pink stucco. Squalls of conscience with "Romp room" above the lettered reds. Around the legs of a chair & round screened ventilators something uncorked, pursued the shabby illusions from the outside: the shuffling of many Eskimo feet, diamond in their blast, stamping upon my ears.

Bathes a humus in the trees. Mighty, mighty, mighty & locking the sprees. & such inconstancy of vouches. A thin, white sandwich slid across the counter at me. I stopped at a lunch-bar east of the cemetery. Blast the portals; rip off the artist at Laredo Lane. I dialed the number & watched brainstorm come, verges all lapping at my thighs. Ageless grifters walked the long Hollywood beat on the other side of the plate glass. The noun above the clouds, pearl-gray in the afternoon, green on the other, so that they passed from ruddy youth to sickly age as a case stood, manic to the outside observer.

Graham Court had changed to yards or so since reeking of Chinese lacquer in the last hour, cliffs, same abandoned ugliness, eggs lapping at the ancient piles on their uppers, but these simmer as a part of their reality. Guarantees off into a limo, which took him into the company of Mrs. Kilbourne; Reavis had given the cares new dimensions: numbers ought to hang above the crack of her ass, angling into the powers of be unltd., on balance, of kelp & bitter fish. For Reavis, at least, Graham Court was a place where anything could grill: set into the handsome poor for a thousand dollars a day... The gun was a mesa... Squaws luxed, incognito, by the freeways.

The woman stood up with the yams. She held names in a gingerly way, as if they were reptiles. She dropped the lets into her flat reach, reaches of passion & the undeniable of it all. She snapped in his hand, hugging the lifting until it suspended him... Names were reptiles.

HEAR ME TALKING

& so the focal point of all terror becomes the violence
implicit in it. & the suspicion a hard red brilliance to
her life, otherwise lost in the slush. Of shame & shameful.
Maybe it was all off the top of her head.
That was the phrase she returned too most often,
Feeble & she must listen, clear above the coffee. Gravity &
she tenses. Or in the museum gradually became aware of
the other objects besides the paintings. First the air vent
in the wall. Then the rug, chairs, thermostat, people,
smoking signs, programs, hardwires. & that way of
underlining it, there was no way of underlining it,
there's no way without some sense of dramatics or psychology
seeping in. Seepage. Gets them confused & dashing toward the
opening. A second place where a cause lives.
For a cause. Any move she makes throws her into a completely
impossible moment. Then, no longer possible, the woman dies.

Their punishment & there was plenty of it
sank overnight in a lode of envy & worth.
It was an inroad into fiction, new forms of the collective struggle.
In terms of a novel, but they never could have written one.
& they both knew it. So maybe all the talk was a deception,
real enough- like lies are such tangible things.
Maybe the accuracy was a swelling near the lobe & hurt... Novella.

Well so you understand that none of this was final.
It was the approach of it. Answering the phone,
a calm stretch combines with the brittle conscience.
"A luck charm" someone says, their voice swims through the arms.
Teeth crack the conscious crime. She goes for the pat ending.
Writing an essay, others react savagely but we wander up-
stairs like a good biography & gambling for a change.
Like the odds that are pending & think of Baltimore.
So you understand. In fucking too long
the People contribute to the various tributaries of the world.
It's a function of Racist society but we don't want to think about it.
& the dear Outsider flaking off into fields of vertical light:
Needs nouns to link things,
needs heart to King Four.

That night we have the great buffalo dream...

What is about. I wanted you, hypothetical,
to see the difference between inside & outside & it became
impossible not to bring up about, which is what I started
with in the first place. So place & not process. But SHE
must know about this: about the brain about.

About HER, & SHE did.

If it was a matter of repetition they thought & if the truth
came out, down on them unavoidably.

If it was a matter of convention- said "you" & meant SHE,
SHE & meant circumstances, serving the greater masses,
some kind of wrong angle maybe.

Tension. & they thought about it some more,
magnifying the original mistake proportionately.
Lacking the proper ideology.

Prey to the paranoia that drives a stake through the heart.

So standing at the door she had some sense of him watching
her movements & then, leaving, bumped into the wall

& the terror of it, unforeseen but always implicit.

& so talking, you listening, she said & the power of it
tripled immediately, folded up & then the release
until a clean break threw itself across them.

Well so they arrived, they got there, what a deal.

"There" was power & corruption, an equation they managed
but never handled. Chew coca while waiting for the tea to brew:
a sucking motion in their hurry to go insane.

The two of them. The clerk basically gay

& depressed by some monstrous lack.

& chose a chasm between them. A thread of saliva body to
body, front to front. The same old problem
of choosing person, cause & case.

So choosing. Back to basics,
a serious moment.

The proper amount of yeast & calcium lactate.
the sound of the mixer filling up the lapses
between them & subject.

Say it just turned out that way & apologize.

Not wanting to rip anybody off,
failing at the big moment & wired.

Present & hypothetical. & then, went under.

MICHAEL MANTLER

for Bob L.

First on an honest blast of music the thumb rolls inward, Carla Bley intro outclassicking Cecil if that's possible, the moribund drifts off, hand-jive to the King's English & all you Van Morrison fans likely as not awake, the steeple burns in moorish, D. Cherry matches the quivering waves of above, if you feel like you can tell me dont, cold beer to go, now Gato B. cuts in after a straight flush, all doors in use, exit is blood & blood is exit, head emptying into a riff, the bass always maintained, anything but jaggedly continuous pine needles rip out Charlotte Bronte's guts, punch the Tupamaro's face, catch Steve Lacy's brief amidst the blows, persons of the lower case, time 3:23, a note flattens with the seconds, the world sees none better above the ocean's roar loose in the fabulous class of a chest, Anger Man, the hat makes empty, Chicago in the long-run, mind going white & thin as the voice's weird, Pharoah backs into a modal one & the horns rumble lowest common denominators, rubbing the equals, Cecil T. threading calm, his was a guest bulk, words limed against a backing, Jack Bruce was later, two albums five years & states the Romantic case, main issue, head bursts through, face unrolling into the Muse, the utmost string lets out to the end, drone, then comes one solo, sheer sides, surrounded.

TWO

This bus trip is the type that never ends. People keep disappearing from their seats then replacing themselves later on, unannounced. Light slowly fills the landscape outside the window: it does it in layers, cobwebs of light stretched from one tip to the other, of left to right. When I switch off the reading light above my seat instead of everything going out with it it all begins to glow, so much so that I can see through the air to the air inside it, the air that's supposed to be there.

The man next to me starts talking. His voice crackles like an empty candy-wrapper. Electricity or a death rattle. I don't want any of it, try avoiding, prefer to keep things solo & sanitary. He tells me how I shouldn't believe everything I see nowadays. He, for instance, is an important industrialist & due to die soon. People envy him, it's touch & go each day of his life. He eyes me expectantly... In these kinds of situations my life is always an open book. I capitulate & tell him everything. I know he's a parasite. I start saying "yes, yes" to everything he says... Now we're in Ypsilanti, now we're on the bus again. Somewhere between here & Chicago the man is supposed to fade, blur out, but he just keeps on reading his map. Instead of an ordinary map this one is on a spool of tape & to read it he has to keep unwinding more & more of it until the tape starts wrapping itself around his body all the way up to his knees & I get the idea of it: the tape is really a mummy's bandage. Inside the bandage a man does calisthenics. The man never moves. He tells himself reassuringly how the motion is all in his head anyway, he considers it all some kind of blindly logical penance. "Goodbye, goodbye" I tell myself in a clear, germane voice not unlike the man's which nevertheless divides itself into two separate tones, one much lower than the other, this is how I hold conversations with myself. When I smile the weight of the immense lips needed to produce such a voice almost knocks the rest of my face over.

A man sits next to me. Amiable conversation, same words as above. He rips the Quotes of Malcom X off of his bones & uses them to roll cigarettes with. We smoke with respectful silence. Even the landscape... "unnnhhhh." "Mmmmmmmmm." Inside my bloodstream is a car where everything happening on the bus is duplicated on a smaller scale. "Thankyou."

His voice grows a thick, gre-n root, waves it in front of me. I grab it & squeeze because it's obviously a flag. Agressive Mudra.... I try not to lose my calm. Blow it, start inventing too many moments at once.

A man sat down next to me. He would say & then refuse to answer questions. He'd show me various stages in his deterioration mental & physical then refuse to name anything specific. Names & dates are exactly what I needed. In anger I snapped the string between our chests & watched him collapse onto the cigarette-littered floor. I wadded up several dollar bills & stuffed them into his palms. "Now shut the fuck up." The man's clothes rotted away. A terrible stench, I'm going to throw up. He slowly uncrumpled the bills & ate them. He lit up. NO SMOKING PERMITTED! I ripped the cigar from his mouth & ground it into mine. "A freak of nature" the man squirmed. Now he hands me his stomach. It throbs expectantly in my cupped hands. It is a medium-sized, reddish organ. I make my way toward the chemical toilet at the back of the bus & dump the stomach into the water. I watch it bob up & down & think of Chinese food, anything to help me get through the rest of the week. My mouth waters deliciously.

The man has organized the construction of pyramids in Iowa & Minnesota.

A large question mark hangs down from the center of the ceiling. The radio screams out some directions. Today's Classifieds are so filled with hatred I dont want to listen. I hang myself inside some empty clothes & lay there listening to the breathing going on all around me. I watch you latch onto the question mark hanging from the ceiling. To you anything is a means of escape, anything is a crane. I stuff dollar bills, rubbers, passports into the hole of your stomach. I hate everything about you. I see you living inside your lozenge of pain. The man who sits nextdoor smiles, blows out his brains, does breathing excercises to forget about the air sucking in through his head.

He described the New Ice Age to me. He described the museums buried beneath great snowbanks. The Louvre frozen over, the Tate in London, the Prado. His eyes were lakes of ice. If it was a question of pain my pain was greater than his & the man was bound to admire me. But how do I get him to admit this? A large conveyor belt moved along the edge of the highway carrying with it sensations I cant allow to exist any longer. I'm attached to these sensations like a memo whose sole purpose is is... "You fucker" the man thinks, sensing what goes on & using a can opener lets his thoughts roll out all over the museum carpet. (Imaginary.)...

A man sits next to me on the bus & exposes himself. Instead of a cock there's a mirror with a deserted village painted over it. It's something that happened one day, he had to call in sick to work & lost his job. "What do you want of me?" the man with the body asked. His body smelled of mine: layers of desert sand & martinis... small bands of hatred that roamed the countryside killing & trashing, all the good things in life. I watched the enviable layers of his life sift into mine, past the floodgates, sierras & beaches. I thought: "Part of the whole is missing & I don't know which part. Perhaps if I meditate I realize that I'm not that part. That what's missing is his problem, not mine." ... I didn't think that, just wrote it, a few moments ago. I wrote: "All the good things in life, I said, speech seemed too formless to hang on to such a moment"...

FOUR PARTS TO THIS STORY

HOW TO FEEL & HOW TO BEHAVE

In adversity & bad weather I keep hauling the brilliant words to the doorstep of each day. I continue this process, sit down in front of a tired fire: the one single warning which can always be given in good faith. The problem is lying... I cant apprehend A's sensations directly, never know if they're real or sham. (Verification.) This notion of A's pain only gets its sense from my own pain for I cant tell when I have a case & when I do it becomes anything but that case itself. A's pain. Her pain is the source of all the pain around us but I continue numbly along, only half suspecting, receiving less than most, using whatever sensations are available to me. To feel a pain is to have it. For me to feel A's pain is logically improbable: two places dont exist at once. To feel A's pain I'd have to own it & her. I respect her boundaries & she respects mine... always lying.

& the problem sets fire to my hair which was a brilliant blaze of nouns & worry in the first place. & I am alone, contained & probable, alive & mining the evidence.

I am in love with A. In adversity & bad weather I keep hauling the brilliant words into a steaming gap- all the "the"s of my life- trust in the frayed typewriter ribbon

were it not
for the lies, the betrayals... Falling out of the bottom of an ordinary language it is a case of something I cant mention. Too inexact. If we have no bodies then nothing separates us any longer: we're the same person. I lock the door, draw a bath. Water floats around a second, more accessible self: (Specify conditions.) Pain up to a certain point is a diagnostic tool. Someone takes notes watching A's every move. But in fact neither behavior nor anything else can be known to be evidence for the truth of a proposition, truth of proposition A, criterion of same

(No criterion.)

Something in your argument is illegitimate. Something about the premise of another body, that body of common experience, placed between yours & mine. But listen, we fuck. Listen the pain I felt took the form of something guessed at, never shown. & I said it out loud so as to reduce it, knowing that in no case would belief be warranted.

BRILLIANT CORNERS

Fucking then & not pain. But A is afraid of the pain I wont mention. She sees the crowd in every eye. & in each silence she vanishes, until she's gone. It's a problem, the frequent hauling out of situations, sussing out her every fear. Trembling & hesitant on the edge of a translucent theory. & being inarticulate no longer a favor to everyone.

I told her about the Double Standard, the screen between one whole life & an endless succession of moments. No one believed her but for trial & error she said. & always obeying convention the results are never quite clear, shrouded in the belief in her own confusion... I didnt know who owned such a belief & when, so I kept her to it.

The first argument was about pain. I couldnt be sure that she was feeling all of it, everything I was & hers combined, like she said... This was the first moment, the first doubt I'd ever had. It's so hard to believe this version of the story but there must have been a starting point for all the rest, all that follows. There must be some place where I no longer believe in her confusion-(pretense). & from that moment on things divided rapidly, everything crumbled on the tongue & about to be said. Violent spasms. Contractions & then the endless expanse as per agreement. A talked about the void. Her sense of nothing on the outside, everything on the in & how the problem of privacy never arose. A believes that one must learn what thinking, fear & pain are from one's own case. Does not believe that what's observed is one's behavior but rather something inward now on the outside. She considers behavior to be related to an inner state & occurrences are merely an accompaniment or effect of that state. A believes & regards behavior as something less than the criterion for all psychological phenomena- if she believed it to be anything more than less there'd be no need for the analogical argument & the priority given to one's own case would be senseless. A believes that she notes something inside herself she can call thinking or pain & then tries to infer the presence of the same in others. & in failing to do so each & every- there are so many instances- gives up, reclines on a ball of well-meaning, panicked fuzz.

I utter the familiar fact of the other, first person, present tense. According to one's own case self-observation cant be checked by others- (the safety theorem)- everything rapidly unravels into unintelligibility once I try to talk to you over coffee at the place on Eighth Street, or the flat near the zoo.

THE SAFETY THEOREM

So where does location fit in & if not do I actually think of you here or at another place, some place you're thinking of now, different from mine but not. Compare notes, a familiar face, the time it takes...

That there should be thinking or pain other than mine is unintelligible. & perhaps I make a mistake every time in identifying your pain, or in saying this to myself, under the breath & sotto voce. Perhaps all of us do. Ideas of correct & incorrect don't count any more, yet A insists. & I remember her. & so me. My sensation of that memory (because it can never be that memory itself) buckles. You aren't there to sustain it. The end result is that we deny our emotions because there's no one around to couple them with. & the words go ungrammatical without the proper objects attached... I close my eyes & A's world rubs out. She closes her eyes. & I never feel a pain again, no twinge of remorse, nothing. & when you gesture things divide, slowly break off into an ocean inside your eyes- residue.- an ocean of worry...

A man has to be given a new spirit & so be a different man each time he wakes. Call this "breaks in continuity"- there are by-laws- A maintaining that everything goes on smooth & uninterrupted, things that blow up in the mind slowly settling on her writer's sleeve like snow.

& these days I can never see without something being placed before me & there always is... consider pains... A's favorite idea about pains is that they are states of the brain. A pain can be intense or weak, stinging or throbbing, but there is no sense at all in saying that it is two inches long, heavy or light. Just as love is neither odd number nor prime a pain has no measurable physical properties. Everything remains relative. & to confuse categories is to talk nonsense. No material property stands for pain. & what holds for A's pain holds for mine... there's no such thing as mental algebra... So the mind cannot be material.

HOW TO SAY & WHAT TO BELIEVE

The safety theorem says we need not worry. Messages aren't being intercepted & once intercepted are undecodable. The safety theorem allows for inscrutability plus. A is a devotee of the safety theorem. She turns the AM up still louder & lays out the boxes of words time has brought her. All the words face-up, take on a tangible quality, life continues to be illusory, this illusoriness doubtless a tactic.

A extends her hand to mine. We touch. I doze on & off to remember this. Pale turquoise on the outside, to do with dreaming all this moments before I wake up & see her body inches from mine.

There was a time once & now we have determined that we must do it for ourself. Now a line of names counts for the same thing as a dialogue. We break bits of the names against our lips, attesting to the specific environment. We hammer bubbles of thought. & the memory which lies locked away. Bolts clink against the suburban now, many ago, now lost... So A edges toward the conclusion of what separates us & after that another one, more or less mighty than the first. But of pain there's not the same difference. & she holds hers between fists nailed to an objective moment in the eyes of another sitting before her, like a cushion to rest her head on or mine. Moments crowd the rim. "Keep to the point" a voice says, though the point vanishes with no attempt to translate.

What A holds to be an eviction notice & what B holds to be one constitute different concepts. But the fact remains they will be evicted & hindsight will prevail. Decisions snap against the blue-white space zone locking them into another impasse. Maybe there will be compartments for each one, one before the spill, then fade... always the doubt & safety, interchangeable as the two will never

Now A tells
her story:

(I)

At one point Willie's head cracks open & all the yolk spills out. He feels much better after that & starts thinking about getting on with the story. The whole room begins to fill up with a warm & milky light. Wilma thinks she's just on the edge of a flat earth. Slabs of human beef hung drying just outside the cabin door. Some blue dots float about. Squish went the urine between their legs.

(II)

In just
Each brown
up her mouth
Red the flow of blood.
between floated
you(n)ths. thought
off he's forgotten
beneath air's
body. Getting
out tried
At one yolk spills
starts ing about
fill
W(van)il(L)ma on the edge of a
beef dry--- Some blue
dots float about. Squish went the urine between their legs.

(III)

In just a mouth the flow of blood. Floated thought, off. Each
brown up her Red between months. He's forgotten beneath air's
body. Getting out tried, yolk starts. At one spills-ing about
fill, on the edge of a dry-about. Wilma Vanilla beef. Some blue
dots float about. Squish went the urine between their legs.

THE PROBLEM CEASES TO EXIST

I dont mind objects, but I dont care to exist beside them.
If you cant make love without making a permanent imprint on
the physical world, then maybe love isnt worth making.
In this sense any permanent damage to my senses not necessary
to the furtherance of human existence or the illustration of
an old concept is a crime against humanity (sic) crimes against
humanity...

To some people speech is a kind of drag.
To these people any discussion is an art form.
It's not necessary for me to see that person again, I can just
say them. Not even say it, but think it.
I could keep on sneding postcards to the spot where we'd first
met, that way I'd remember it.
I could falsify reports then send them to the newspapers, that
way I wouldnt forget them.

The body meets the ego & thinks it's dog food.

My arm has such presence it frightens me. Things reach a certain
tautological level. Life depends on documentation & my life,
fully photographed, stands upon the sites of its multiple & in-
credible disappearances.

"Cancer" is not a short-story about art. In the time it takes
to get from "new" to "old" you either come up with something
new or a second or third version does it seconds later. You
produce instantly or arent a factor.

Perhaps I'm not really speaking this language.
Perhaps this language isnt my language.
I could be crazy, I could answer the telephone. I keep subtracting
myself from life & always end up having to claw my way back in
when I have to take a shit. Tiny omens pelt my face like hail.
System replaces object. An idea that cant perpetuate itself falls
slack at the door. Spectators are horrified, but dimwitted...

Once the appetite has been whetted formal disintegration proceeds,
the sky empties, statements are reproduced with the kind permission
of those who own them.

An object replaces one more time (accidental), none of which can
be sold.

At the end of a strong line of words my brain's in knots.

One rupture replaces another, a small section of the prurient
interest. All becomes a triangle, under cover of the dense
rain-forest. I, more out of need of some object than is possible
to begin with, bang against the pale moments- it's impossible
to forget- around the corner to the lever that lifts the dark
from my shoulders.

Copyright. A valid choice when you first realize something's
new & vital there's an instant just before it becomes a cliché.
If I must be implied in everything then lower a large, white
wall between us. Always consider the pretty yellow cloth &
the quiet which shimmers in the dark. Always consider the icon
of that pretty image to be the prettiness itself lest you blow
your mind. Lest you blow your mind.

This writer...If one cannot overcome the contradictions, one
stops, reassesses, creates newer & greater contra-...
If property lay on the table, then let it lie there.
Then let no one come between us & the narrow landing...
Name-brand subject...stop here.

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