

Butters no Flutters

Ware, ware aposema ignored. It was from this, oh this, that the whole thing hinged on, audience, auditors, ambling idiots! That soot covered flutter of a wing, now-extant wing, slowly then-glimmering into extinction. This that sonar-ed down everything. The system, oh the sainted system, *ping!* where nothing leaves the system except heat, *ping!* the shimmering byproduct of the winged friction, upward amulets of the to-be-butterfly-fricassee. We draw in, we draw out, but there are things we are constrained by, *ping!* there are basic rules, you see, *ping!* there are basic concepts, that everything we conceive must obey! Salaam aleikoom! $N=kTB$. Damning roots, and filtering thoughts, nothing escapes, nothing leaves except that shimmering (what is heat?) convective consequences of existence. *Ping!*

-I'm not picking anything up, Charley. Over.

-Roger that niner-niner. Nuthin on this end neither. Over.

You see, page-turners, the whole damn thing, burrito, enchilada, wet bean dreams of engineering, ecosystem (whatever consumable good, really) hinged on this single sainted sequence occurring, this my starving type-gobblers, *would* have been the proverbial flutter of the wing, but, but! That triggering cuntjuntion, that conjunction wearing its slick suit and slicker hair with slickest words, that preposition propositioning us with split legs and raised brows, *but...* the only warning wings were about to be swept from the windshield of existence, the two halves of a

whole fluttering organism, radial symmetry be damned! In approximately two blinks of an eye blurred by chronic dryness (work injury), one neck turn (creaking of uncushioned vertebrae, hear those fat pads screech), and half a muttered shitabitch! (ooh what an impatient man he is, this body) those divinely necessary wings were going to be lay crushed beneath the left swipe of the windshield wipers of a one Brent Mackleroy, peon extraordinaire, (let's be candid, kiddies, when was a Brent ever not a doucher) who in his haste to get to work (Keystone, Transportation), had driven right through the migratory pathway of the last of the lesser spotted willowby grandeur. Thus the two timescales were set on a rather violent collision course that would incur no financial damage at all (not that Brent would have reported it, raised monthly payments equal decreased monthly PBRs) *Ping!* Hoist the sails for freedom. Paws off those emergency brakes ya weenies! At 6:43 precisely, soon-to-be-damned-doucher-Brent spluttering at the delay in routine -shoulda been 6:35, should have, damn damn damned unmatching socks in the drawer shoulda laid them out last night can't go to work looking like a goddamned- here it it...the two vectors intersected SPLAT...Gasp, the sharp intake of breath, knifing bronchioles, the collective inhalation of *no one at all*, there should have been, oh GAWD there should have been a swooning of widows, a weeping, a wailing and a gnashing of teeth! Over that tiny pop, over that teensy lil, tiniest, insignificant-insectine thud on the standard engineered glass arc of the middle-of-the-road quality (Lexus) that was in the middle of the road (I-5), with a yellow puddle in the middle of the shield (casualty). Outside the Lesser Grandeur, lay gasping its last in the squelched puddle of its own hemolymph, drawing it's beetling arthropodic swan song through maimed spiracles. Ware, ware aposema! *Piiiiing!* Screamed no one at all.

-Missy, yeah. I swear I coulda heard something.

-Screen's blank dorkus. If there ain't no boop, we ain't turning gloop.

-Yeah, well...

-Yeah well, what.

-Nothin.

-You mean, Nothin, over.

It's striking coloring colored by the city soot, blackened blight from twin miller tower fatly erected for the fat gutted foam sucker, *ping!* belching burps of ash and acid, ping! It would have made two staring eyes, the downy scales, the brilliantly engineered flying machine, wind-tested, flutterflown, dashed and downed, signature drowned eyes burning right through No One At All. The symbolism someone would have had to acknowledge, the oblique thought that someone was looking back, there was a consciousness, there was a presence, in other words chums, there was a humanness to consumable. Misericordia Divina, it would have mattered. But alas, for Brent. Alackaday for us all! That downed butterfly, Ishi the last of its kind, expired in the rolling twitches of death and battering freeway monoxide winds, avada kedavra'd by sweeping wipers! Sayonora, sweetheart! No choirs of angels to sing you to sleep, only the blaring crescendo of the I-5 rising in overtures of squealing brakes and grinding axles. Do not go splat into that good night. But, blinkers, but, it did. It did, dead. Incontrovertibly vertically. The sad yellow splodge a causal casualty of progress, indicators left unindicated to unlooking onlookers, if only if only, the ivory-billed woodpecker would have sighed! But since it was just a splodge on a windshield, not smeared on a canvas or on the back of a uterus relevant in two to

twenty years time which could have then yielded a screaming child engulfed in flames running naked down a napalm road, frozen to the eyes of the world that pulled heartstrings where things happened. It could have yielded a vulture hopping oh so closer, beak snapping while ribs shadow sadly and head curls. But no so for our flutterless friend not given humanity to previously human-less bastards.

But it was just a cadmium yellow splatter now, out of the tube and onto the thankless canvas of the window, Liver'd and Cock's Com'd so one saw except the driver who couldn't seen anything else, no matter how he pulled the button the wipe the washers off, the water was gone, the fluid refilled, and so the windshield wipers just spread it around impasto, the thin yellow film that used to be in the guts of the arthropod, the greenish crackle of the hemolyph that powered the wings, the legs pulled off and all at angles, tanglings around the wipers sadly, scraping lines in the gutjuice, the atoms smearing thinner and longer, lightly crystallizing in the chemical winds that blasted off the asphalt, that roared past the two lanes of traffic streaming out of the electric city, ablaze with signs that had nothing at all to do with the tragedy of the wipers, the erasure of a species, arc by arc, squelch by squelch, of millenia of work.

There were things that might have happened, no flutter now, no leaping systems of consequences, no furling storms and whirling clouds, none at all, just the cloying scent of progress dabbed under fat wrists of flabby modern harlequins. The system had not been perturbed, no furrowed earth brows, no condescending society clusterfucks, t would remain forever less then 23. WE have determined nothing, not even the flows, nonperiodic though they may be. In terms of a Keplerian sneeze,if he had simply woken up from a snooze and brushed off a lepidoteran tickle, if something across the centuries had alighted on his nose and hopped on a

Einsteinian tunnel to now. It certainly would have been one hell of a beginning. But I guess this is something completely different.

The gavel bangs! meeting adjourned. On to the next item of business.

-We aren't janit-

-I will have no part in cleaning up that mess, Meredith! It's disgusting as are you, and if you ask me again, I shall scream and someone will come running.

Tectonic Mythology

Swing low sweet seismograph, coming for to carry me home. What we are doing word-chewers, are sketching these movements in twitching spasms of earth giants. It may seem opaque, punk, dreamy in a Cereberusian way, all saliva ropes and teeth at angles, while the mists of Niefhelm waft around our paws, but the narrative seismograph records all, you see, words sketched valleys and rifts tallest mountains of morpheme movement. Behind which the ice giants wafts in great glacial lollops, all crashing and shedding of icy limbs and gnashing lichen colored teeth, great fists battering the skies, hair made of waterfalls. Underneath which thunderbirds slumber and curl with breath a millenia long and lightning crackling in their bellies, eyelids cracked in tectonic faults and reptilian hibernations because storms now are nothing, our memories are short, and stubbed like bloodied toes. But the point is *this* story, a story, *our* story in which we are both, you and I dear friends, bound and gagged together in typographic manacles, but no sex stuff of course. Strictly business. Strictly science! For posterity of course, so be honest. Where was I? and you? Ah! Recording the turning points on the unrolling scroll cycled ever further by electric impulses, figuring out the gathering points of energy, from where to where don't care! Beneath below between, forgetting the grammatical geography of the sentence, dive beneath the page and burrow in, tunnel with eyeballs and dream sequences and other assorted literary devices, follow me muncher, I'll open your eyes, pry em and leave them wide and watering, red veined and goggling. Ignore the death we just witnessed. Bottle that

tragedy up inside you so it slowly ferments into a grief so pungent the fumes acidify your intestines into a delicious mess of regret you melt into-AH, back to the start.

It was once said by a man who wasn't believed at all because he was such a horrible liar that the earth had started out as once giant porridge mass of breakfast gloop. No one believed him, because he was a liar, with both pants and publications on fire, but nevertheless it was true. The geologists soon came round, evidence was pulled out from asses and strata, and thoroughly harrumphed into wider thought, acceptable theories, made the swift transition from crackpot scorn to common knowledge within a mere generation, though our righteously scorned geologist died and was buried ignominiously shamed and bound in humble pine because as we all know, liars never prosper even when they aren't lying at all. And this porridge-eaters, dear oatmealy-mouthed fools, is what we need to keep our eyes thoroughly fixed upon, don't you dare take your eyes off it, not for one second, not a damn millisecond, not a flugging nano-pico-deca-zeta-hepta-This is where the action happens, baby. This is where the crust thickens like yesterday's jam.

So with your watering eyes, font gulpers, look down at your feet, to the ground, wherever that may be, whatever shape and disgustingly modern contrivance we have covered it with, look into the concrete covered, linoleum labeled, highrise held, tiled and stamped, shaled and shafted, driveled and bezeled floor beneath you, and then open them further, stare through it, down into the crust, into the gritty minerals, the iron and ore that swell up into crust and keep going! Hold your breath and hope because we're not there yet! We must dig and writhe like worms to get where we are going, we must scratch with mole paws and seethe like magma, to find it. Look! There, never mind the heat, never mind the pressure, staggering you into submission, stand tall

AND DON'T BLINK against the weight of the planet, the tons and pull of continents because we've reached the point, well, more of a line really, if you can imagine it, if you dare, a line, this line that stretches the earth round in jagged dances and continental edges. We've reached the breaking points beneath our surface world, the one we bobble and skate across on the weak and flawed plates, we are fist deep in these devouring cracks are where the good stuff happens. Where the vibrations and spurts and gasps of Gaea all started. Where we really start catching heat, molecules wriggling in delight, we'll winging round the end of that orbit at 67,000 miles per hour. So it is here struck through by the lines that criss and cross the core, that we have to bring in some paltry human thoughts to understand the great energies because the shakes and shivers that crash though us have names. Names and stories. Written in some tatty library book pages, coughed from the lungs of a dying shaman, ripped by a colonial journal and flogged to students, ended up in aisle J, squashed between a skinny pale blue Artic novel, and a meltish forgettable, inconsequential Jaruleing, there sits, squashed, unopened, a story who is no one's at all any more, and all at once, absolutely correct, there is a story about the world snake who ate his tail, and every time he shakes in scaled and exquisite pain, coils thrashing and spine quivering, earthquakes happen, here and there, with every bloodies nibble. Well, staring into the red and yellow glow of the earth, is it that far off if you forget mythology entirely? Can't you see the fangs and scales in bright magnesium white, in bursting silicon and sodium? Is it so wrong, these slips and consuming parts, this constant motion, the exhaustion of death and rebirth, drag and suction, of aethenospheres and lithospheres. These lost things that once were eternal to the fluttering creatures that lived and died, those ephemeral lifetimes, buried beneath, miles, thousands of degrees hotter, down down in the molten places, where gods are born, where the

unreachable becomes legend, has to, knowledge reaches its limits. The deep places where we cannot know, could not ever go, only let the hypothetical glimmering of dopamine and cephalization dream. Your eyes watering yet, blinker?

I can't scream it any louder at you, but you myopic, weak eyed, watery, liquidic limp-dick! It is in blinking that the whole world is missed, those tiny moments where shifts occur, that 400 millisecond increment where all is lost! So keep em open, or the whole thing is a writeoff. Only fit for bureaucrats and filing cabinets. Keep em open! Aposema ignored shifts the balance from zero! Rising thermometers, rising seas, rising tempers, rising winds, rising fires, rising flames all around our toes and singing the bottom of our rubber souled hearts. But not yet. But soon...slitheringly soon. So if you believe anything I am saying, anything at all, half is lies, that's the mark of a good story, half is half is fact and the other half is smoke and mirrors forged in the heart of a dying planet, the wing of a butterfly, and the mouth of a snake.

These lines stretch across the turning world, under feet, underhoof, overhead for some unfortunates six feet under. Stretching and cracking, the skin of the belly of a pregnant woman, full of stories, full of potential, painful, poignant. I TOLD YOU NOT TO BLINK. Regardless of flutters of butters, things happen, the world changes, regardless of the feet they are under, the eyes they are watched by (yours, now). The one humbling force, the bunched up elephant skin of time. The porridge man knew this, and thus, we finally have a story, an interesting one, an old one, something that isn't ours at all. But pay attention, you might learn something anyone you insatiable typecrunchers. And now in this humidly late hour, you must. We all must.

If there were ears to hear it, the crash and thrum, metal fingers to feel, the humming and hissing, lab notebooks to record it, the noises and stillness that are a part of the boundaries.

Those places where death and rebirth, those names we have given the eternal processes, the slide and slip of continents, the large masses, the biggest carrying points, the flat land, the tall, the forces that are the makers of our universes, our tangible things, our mountains and ridges, pushed, pushing up towards skies held in check by laws, skies held down by molecular forces and aethneospheres, pressure and things we have named, things that we have tamed and labeled. To predict, to know, to shore up, make safe, means nothing to that with no conscience, to that that is law, consequences. Each grain, sand, cumulative thing adds. One sand becomes a beach, becomes a coastline becomes a continent. Weight and body, downwards, upwards, directing things around it. Adds up, always, until it simplifies into the small. The tangible graspable thing, concepts. A river, zoom in, a bank, where birds flit and fly. All things additive, all must obey the larger things, the consequences, the entangling forces. Ware, ware, aposema.

But who gives a fig really, or a forbidden apple? Land masses and asses plodding along, fast as hair grows some say, fast as fingernails. Ignorable, utterly ignorable. Forget those lashing continents riding on their viscous floes, boring bored, moving on, class! Snip them away from your thoughts, toss the split end in the trash, its where they belong really. Quick trim and everything is shipshape, no nasty dirty dirt thoughts to disturb our work, our created universe. What are boundaries anyway, meeting points, you'll be sinistral, I'll be dextral, deal? Now heave ho! Push with all your might, harder, harder, til we're pressed up, shoving, thrashing, straining, anything the get across through. Stop, dammit, stop! Too much, it was just to illustrate a point, sheesh. We're just moving past, moving on, nothing to do here blinkers, nothing to see. Now elsewhere, out on the other plates, converging, diverging, now there's where the party is. You'll

get some action there tonight, a hot date, hot HOT, melt your face off in you dive too deep into her!

The juicy stuff is coming, this I swear, my gelatinous gummy bears, proper Welch's vino, with people and plots and all sorts of fermented fruit.

Before we knew this, we knew nothing, pah! Nothing about densities and aethenospheres. But what's the point if you know it, whatcha gonna do about it, huh? Nothing, I thought so you curdled coward. Stand back and watch the fireworks, watch it shake rattle and roll! Yowza! What's knowledge anyway except for something to be ignored. All it does is take away planets, and shake up the ground beneath your feet a millennia ago. Somebody told me something about forms once, idealized bastards, and I laughed at their face, the only forms I need are the curving silhouettes of Macy Walters, Yowza! Knowledge shmowledge. Compartmentalize to survive, that is the greatest good. Morality is for weenies. I breathe, I see, I fuck, and that's the show mates, chums, amigooos.

Where'd the story go?

-in your pocket

it's right here, lost it, dropped it, in my pocket.

The curtain falls? End overture.

We're not exactly being subtle here are we folks. Do I have to lay it out for you in dotted lines and dashed splutters of morse. Fine, I'll squiggle it out on this blisteringly heinous papyrus descendant of pulped paper. Things are startings, drilling are drilling, lives are slowly creeping

towards endings one senescing foot at a time. Sometime you can be so obvious, you
fingerlicking page-turners.

The Conference Table

The drops fell in debasing showers, slanderous stipples upon the luminous surface of the mahogany, again and again, in parodies of the small showers that used to come from the northeast of the island where the tree had once stood, diffusing over the chert ridges and flint forests until the gravid clouds could not longer contain their gravity laden cargo, f-f-falling once upon a time in a forest far, far away. Back when the mahogany was just unformed biomass, a living column of united cells stretching toward the bluest sky above, pantheon holding, pumping water up in molecular chains through uncountable chambers skyward, falling towards branches thrusting up to the canopy crawling with multitudinous creatures spine-legged, spiny, spineless each dependent upon the tree, each dependent upon each other, each living its tiny universe upon each branch, breathing, dying, recycled by more and more, a microcosm of the entangled world drenched in water!

But now, the once-tree is raised higher than it ever was, ripped from its bed, now artificially rooted with chains and cranes atop the executive floor of Keystone Corporation, collective Golgatha, now closer than ever to the sky it once craved, but between it, grated metal, metered and counted, squares of plaster, the bluest blue now corporate grey, no sun to speak of but the tittering insolence of quivering fluorescence, the cruel eagle's beak that warmed nothing but pierced, the heartwood of the forest, sternum cracked open with the violence of men's hands, torn arterial from the loam-grained earth, beaten into something alien and heavy and lacquered with supposed value, now the chatelaine centerpiece of the insensate atmosphere, now the

ligneous henge of the collaboration, exposed on the floor, legs spread wide, consensual in its unsentience, the deep rose grain of the boardroom table supine into the opulent vastness of the meeting room, man's hands, stroking the whorls of the flesh in boredom, fingering the supple skin, probing and groping idly.

And this, this luciferian fall of drops was different in the desert room, this was a propelled expactoration, a forceful expulsion of saliva, each morpheme martially spattering glutinous on the varnished deadness of the tabletop, each new volley, tenacious, salacious bombardment, lying sinfully static, horribly unused upon the cadaverous planar surfacing in the effete environment and the surrounding inert listeners. The source of the furious precipitation lay two arms lengths upstream, the mouth of the conversational headwaters spitting amylic secretions, strings of saliva, flapping and slapping, the dangling jangling walrus ropes up to the face of a man, thick-lipped, rubbery.

The man, a man, he-man was talking, outwards, angular, eighteen listened. They were caught in it, oh they were caught in the crystal of the cups, minute expressions frozen in the silicate amber. Twitching cheek, furling lip, prickling, tickling brow! It was a record of the last moment before impact, that eternal moment stretching, where everything always seems to absurdly slow, words hurtling at millions of screaming miles per hour, spewing gases, this great flaming thing, and beneath the figures stare upwards, mouths agape, eyes tracking, pupils widening leica-like, stone in stormy waters, some recoiling in fear, instinct?, some holding onto: hands, desks, the angles between it and us, that thing that is about to change everything, ruin destroy, make better? The coming impact, the inevitable cataclysmic catalyst.

Sternum, Braithe, and Lone lay cowed, predictably practiced blankness blanketing the bovoidbediance on their faces. Wide flat features, huffling heifers, stuffed into suits, they were nothing but wordchewers, capable only of regurgitation of the corporate ideology, an empty tasteless cud packaged in synergized granules. No problem, no problem at all for the he-man, lip-man, word-maker. The only reasons they had clopped into the boardroom was sheer luck in following the right herd leader in, wet noses to furred prior asses, the closer they quashed to the quivering mass in front, the happier they felt, the pressure taken away by proximity's sake. Squeeze for safety, hoofers. Thinking is a thing of the past, the only faux-thought cephalizing in Sternum, was did he look approving enough, or were his lips just too fat for that? They were so plump and pillowy, should he purse them? No, yes, worse? The blithe trail of Braithe lay in bitter disapproval of the lack of snacks, his jaws clenching in nonmasticatory dissatisfaction. Lone was in absentia, that space between thoughts where only senses reign. Their paths then devoid of the speculative spectating spectre, the unforeseen It, ending in a quick hiss of a gun, but painless for them, expected? They could come and go, Sternum, Braither, Lone, with ponderous steps and not be missed, not be missed at all. Who needs accounting, legal, hr? They were just paper trails, semilunar pawprints filling with dust on a thoroughfare with the end in sight, forget the middling meddlers.

But back to the man, the three man, O E C nam. The tensions tangled and spread still, looks bouncing back and forth under the bully pulpit of *him*. The hard refraction of social nuance, unyielding and mathematical, still going in single seconds. Each bodymind knew their place and position, the hierarchy was set but never permanent, the roles tested and dynamic, a jelloid dynamo of drifting polymers. This room, it was a tenuous place, every action and reaction

confirming and negating dominance, the fate of all social creatures. There were more names to the chairs, cups, handeyeowners, Jacrelle, Tomlinson, Bequrel, Martinez, Jazreel. Factions that shift, quicksand, magma, wooed they would be, mind of their own, they would come into the herd for the right price, they would be swayed. *His* gravity would not be ignored, satellite planets, some sway, some irregularities, but eventually, they would come round the turning point, the farthest they would zing in their flinging orbits, and ohno! back, terminal velocity not reached. They would come into the fold, dear sheep, with wolfing words whispers. Flickering eyes would be directed down, signatures accumulated in looping yeses, screaming in the sadistic Bic, black and blue affirmations. Only one shivered in the unconscious posturing of a downright no, that most Americanest of phraseology, the social telepathy translating to Hell no, we won't go! H. Diamond, acquisitions, muling lip curling up in a sneer of defiance, oblique angle deflecting insubordination, the information bearing rays, photon Irises, caught and magnified the expressions, distorting and wavering through the Waterford.

His mouth was still moving, fat lolling lips, words registering, the sonic repercussions transducing to emotional response in the listeners. Crossing pilgrims, fording synapses, dopamine pilgrims at the altar of connective lust. Here was the same, a glacial tableau, in the last moments before the crushing momentum, before the myelinating phrases come clean, the last moments before movement, the frozen frieze of eighteen precisely, twenty six ears, millions of movements.

What was it, what is it? That reactive dynamo? The speed of sound could no longer be ignored, no longer held off with narrative, literal loose lips now sinking our metaphorical ships: impact. *Pangaea, eighteen square miles of unused wilderness, minimal government regulations,*

the cooperation of the residents. Impact, flattening into the ground, spreading tectonic across the pliable faces, the idea expunged now, hovering in the boardroom, the eighteen pairs of eye's mouths breathing tradewinds, creating clouds in the skyscraper bow, hot breaths, humid heads. *Eighteen square miles of extractable resources, more ore that will give traction to Keystone's trajectory.* It beaded on lips, evaporating upwards, past the catching hairs on upper lips twitched in reactive bent, slowly prickling in peachable fuzz, the sebaceous pubescence. Eyes flickered back and forth. *Our technology, teamwork, and tenacity will bring this ambitious project through to completion, ladies and gentlemen, one month from now!* The hot humid words, the tropical project, the stormclouds of change, this cumulating conversation circled the encircling crowd, rising higher and higher like the leader's voice. Fingers tapped nervously. *We who support the world on our shoulders, we who supply the demand, we whose obligation is to supply the demand, to feed a hungry world, to clothe them, to give them the means to talk, to live their very existence, the sacred duty of industry.* There were eighteen cups held by the hands that followed the eyes that followed the talking man, eighteen cups on the table, slowly sweating droplets congealing in teary trails, pearling pathways slopping down faceted edges. *The supportive pillars of business, we who hold Atlassian the world, we are the linchpin, we are the makers, the doers, and so the progress of today starts tomorrow.* Steaming the glasses, the crystals cut facets, molecules shivering and building, pressurized silicates, frozen firelights bursts, trapped heat making beauty, stopping the passage of light. The light came in through the wall of windows, the lights bounced from the fluorescents, rays ricocheting around through, a frenzy of kinetics, the silhouetted figures ominous against the minimalist interior. Through the crystal cuts facets, the board members were sliced and diced into Gorgon figures, expressions grotesque and grimacing.

Round and round the light burst reflecting refracting their humanity, through the pitcher in the middle, they all were caught mosquito-like, muddling together into a heinous lumpy golem of amber. The index of the conversation building and bending, around the iron words the people changed, changing under the lights beams, fake beaming. The direct words of the man, sonic incidental angels reflecting off the pillars of their bodies, their pliable minds, creating equal and opposite phrases and actions. *Everything is in place now. Productivity is the greatest good. We supply the demand. They who scream it with credit cards and dollars, yen, pesos, the cries pour in unimaginable streams, revenues making rivers through computers invisible, the data streams, the data banks, the headwaters of the world colliding in streams unimaginable.* Same glasses smudging under thumbprints, each oily concentric circle rings the temporary dendrochronology of the present, vague smears, imprints of what was to come, outcomes of the conversations that is the gears of the future, teeth grinding and force building with the linear expectation. *I expect, no, demand, the very best from each of you. Because this company, ourselves, in the webs we are in, no one gains or loses, we simply supply.* The molecular leavings quivered under the baleful eye of the fluorescence, the lights wavering and flat, imbued enough energy to make the leap, kinetically excitable. Dribbling between the strings of conversation they began to change. They too coalesced with the moment, the project strings announcement winding up. Pangaea became real, rising into reality, each salivary syllable substantiating the only thing left of the decisions was the remains of words, the biological consequence of breath.

So then it was to be him and her, eh, him still bending them to his will, her still resisting. No maiden refusal, no coy blunder, no masculine posturing. Him and her, clashing, crushing, the binary brand. That quintessential struggle. Each separate, but the question is would she cull

enough to her cause, would she fragment off, that precious oogenesis of purest formation. Would he stumble and thrust, procreation of the dumbest variety, underlings tumbling out from virginal fonts. His and hers, separate stocks, the story yours and mine?

She had formed under the crushing weight of continents, risen like a goddamned arrow, course set for freedom, for emancipated ruling. Hands plunging from the grimy earth to take her place, she had shined and polished with cutting mind, everything, this was her right, this was her place, this was hers. She had put up with the shit that weaker women crumpled under, had she been made of weaker elements, the years of string, the slicing off of everything that was feminine, the hissed no, the unoffered contracts, to get to here, she had fucking crawled.

He expelled one last breath and gestured, they came to life and left, looks flickering under the chafing yoke of command. Boardroom metaphysics. Presidential puppeteering. Strings string, which strings would tangles. Figures swaying in trainchain thrall. His powerful arms rested on the armchair, they trembled and he noticed beads of sweat pearling on his brow, his chest was tight, somewhere deep in the mountainous being, there was a dull ache. Death to the puppeteer, slowly falling, strings tangling, figures motionless on the stage below. Audience holds that breath. Collective breath. Tidal volumes filling. What is needed is stopped. Somebody stop this train! No protocol, social freefall, anarchy! Stillness behind the stage. Stillness all around, perpetual kinetics slowing, sloooooowing. He breathed deeper, expelling more moisture, keeping rigid while the subordinates filtered out, dull murmur. He could feel their looks, he held his back straight, muscles quivering with the effort, feeling the sweat gather, he was not weak. The door finally shut, he stared down at his left hand, unmoving, numb. It was all his, he breathed heavily, stumbling through his doors, flexing his right hand, it was all his. It had been so easy, God, it

was so easy. He must keep them under control, had to, with words, he could feel the sweat dripping down his back from the effort, he could feel his muscles quivering, his voice was strong, but something was giving, deep down within in, he could feel something shifting, the way dogs know when the pack allegiance has shifted, he could see it in Diamond's eyes, feel it in the rooms, the reins slipping through. He was not gone yet, not done yet. He hadn't done anything. He hadn't done anything yet, but he would be remembered, he would be immortalized. It was San Andreas all over again. No, this couldn't, damn, fuck, San Andreas.

H. Diamond looked back, nostrils widening, sniffing, tiny molecules in the selfsame draft drifting, attached themselves to the horrible olfactory centers, click connect meaning. There was a whiff of death, here there was weakness, bead eyes scored his figure, laser lines, contracting dilating, spinning leica looks, nothing, but it was there. Oh, it was San Andreas all over again. She would wait, this Pangaea, this last ditch, this last-ditch, two-bit nag, was his table, where he would crawl, the dog, to die, curl up toes to nose and she would watch the life fade slowly, pant by pant, gums growing white, lips drying, until all that remained was dried orbs puckering from the heat, not even fit for flies. San Andreas. She let herself be sucked out with the jetstream, fingers unclasping the doorframe, malcontent zephyrs dispersing.

The social diffusion down with the doorway. A few eddy, gather, driftwood, wooden faces pulled by the forces of nooks, separation anxiety. The board left, the dispersal out of the boardroom, to the elevator is the funnel, fusing, doors open and the feet repeat, stepping onward, twenty-six laces. Jostling in juxtaposition what roles they play, floors call to each. Bing, twentieth, out goes Tillmore, bald pate retreating, predictable time, Marquez, amble down and out. They all drift through the stone phloem. That whuffling dance of spacing the push and pull

of interaction. The freezing stiffness of Diamond meant more the buffer pushed away. The subverbal cues were sifted and shifted through by each collection of gangling ganglia. The conscious quiet huff and puff of breath, corporate hoodlums! the sidling of suits, pulling in of pant legs, refusal to touch even a threadcount of threats, look. Doors open, accepted response, another one bites the dust. The cutting edges of her persona, split things, ruinous facts for pseudo-friends.

The afterimages of words, moisture hung murals, ambulated slowly in the emptiness, til they were sucked with mechanical regularity, machiniacal inevitability through the ducts upwards, slithering through the metallic walls, wisping around the corners, sliced and fragmented by whirling blades, shunted and stunted until it was spat outside, the ghoulish disfigured remnants of that beginning conversation, that germinating seed. The gargoyle children hung startled outside the window, over the glaring world that was everything outside. The opposite of that architectural façade, the carapace we pull around ourselves to differentiate, to protect, to separate, to make ourselves into ourselves. Outside the window, the shining metropolis gleamed and steamed, teetering onwards and upwards like the reach of man, forearms unfurling grasping the wrinkled lowlands in a constrictive embrace, suburban fingerlets digging into the flesh in the painful clutch that would not be broken, that wrinkled the lowlands up into red rolling hills and lanes. Dry air vacuumed the remnants upwards, over the city which slopped outwards against the low hills outlined in the dusk corralling them in, the colony of humanity crept up in orderly lanes of blinking traffic lights nodding in intersections, the random fluorescent blockage of office floors, black dead spots of parking lots, all signifiers of the urban activity surrounding. The sunset gleamed red on street lamps and steel and the hardened will of

man, a hungry glow suffused the vista making opaque and almost beautiful the hard edges and decay, beautiful like the thin layer of smog and light pollution, washing it with a dreamy haze, where none should be. It clung to the intersections and rear windows, slinking round the neighborhood shop corners made small by the corporate distance of the boardroom view.

It was a new place, this fabricated paradise, this city. Not even built on the bones of an older civilization, bones have too many memories and no purpose, bones come with rules and names. Perhaps a few forgotten prehistoric souls lay buried on the fringes, but this was a city of the now, this was a city of need, need for space and growth. Mouths and minds came to live and die, eyes came to see that there was more to take. This was a tabula rasa that had fulfilled all the wanton statistics, no longer were epicenters of culture and trade chained to the wanton flow of rivers or layabout flats, innovation was lord and law, and this was written on maps and sheets. It was surveyed through the eyesight and from that first look, first number recorded, been doomed to slavery, and so it had sprung up from the industrial seed, the city blooming with the rapacity of the invasive, sending colonizing suburbs and townships across the virgin desert terrascape. The ground below had soon been veined with cylindrical pipes vacuuming lifeblood water from now-browning valleys, the ground above paved and graded, anchored with 3-bed-2-baths and Thursday poker nights. The sky was slave to the city as well, to the swarm of humanity, its celestial flesh divided and gridded with flight patterns and elevation angles, the gnat-like motion of planes bringing their maggot cargo into the runways, red eyes blinking mechanically. The layers of sky tamed and named, descending, descending, thermosphere, mesosphere, troposphere, caught and snared with piercing beams that probed and transformed into tool. Below the people staring up, staring forward at screens that beeped and whirred, that spit

numbers and calculations, that fed into more formulas that fed the masses. One more thing bent around us. In us from the very start, the will to bend the world around us, an infant sees a blue expanse and reaches a weak hand up, five fingers stretching, primal urge to reach, the grab to grasp and bend, wailing when he cannot succeed.

But when we bend we have to feed things into ourselves, there is a piercing invisibilia that joined the suburbs to the city to the boardroom to the mountains was endless and vital. The connections seethed, tentacles tethering mechanical to biological, trucks making preordained loops, boxes being lifted and taken, people returning to work, leaving. This new circadian arrhythmia, this 24 hour lifecycle of the turning earth, the closing eyes, opening. When a fork lifted, a seed was planted, these signals culturally transmogrified from chemicals to words and buttons, sagebrush sans jasmonate, cell signal bouncing from the sky to earth, to eye to mind to hand. A thousand mouths ate food brought by trucks, a million minds dreamed in Technicolor, all fed by the company and the flesh of the earth. The cycle of consumption and expansion was endless, and within its whirling sphere some profit, some sustain, some lose. But they have made it thus, they have demanded it, and the company keeps it so. And the machinations of the company moved forward, as predictably as the turn of the earth. Driven by the whips of supply and demand they themselves manufacture, Keystone is the epicenter of the earth-quake, and its hive mind was in the boardroom atop their pinnacle tower. The hive mind of a culture-creature, the teeming mindless sentience arising from endless patterns of consumption and need. Consumption driven by the company, fed, sustained, and in turn the company was protected and kept, wrapped in the societal layers of laws and repetitive contrition, building around itself the shining cocoon of the downtown capitol skyline.