

Sunday Mass

As I sat in the pine boroughs with my old filthy black lab who had a bone spur in his spine next to the beaver pond I felt a pull on my brain. You know the one. That familiar tug, up and to the left. Gentle as though nothing is there but you know that if you resist your brain will be ripped from every fiber holding it in place and spin circles inside your skull.

A roll in the dirt, a glorious wandering field of yellow mountain spring flowers, a call from Texas in the bag under the picnic table. I was crossing what was left of a glacier that covered the river. One wrong foot and here I am knee deep in a stream with nowhere to go but up into this cavern of ice and dirt and roots. I pulled back the roots. Opening the door to the world.

I passed through and found myself in a near empty room. Walls had that color, the white of an aged once sterile hospital. In the center was a man in dark faded blue jeans and black shoes. Shirtless. Bald. He had his back to me. Slightly hunched forward. His right arm frantically pulsating back and forth. And that sound. That sound. As if I were spending yet another night in a boys wilderness program. I entered the room and closed the door behind me. I circled the man. Trying to walk silently on that white ceramic tile. Circling. Swish. Swish. Swish. Circling. A young man with no cares about the outside world. Circling. Swish. Swish. Swish. Circle those black shoes and baldhead. Noticing while not noticing the deep red pool growing between the man's feet. I circled father and found the man focused on himself but not in the way I thought. Fingernails and skin. Chunks and flakes. An indefatigably relentless obsession with the ever-widening hole in his wrist.

I soon realized the man scratching whole through his arm was none other than a former me. What was I doing? What am I doing?

Scratching. Scratching, Scratching. Goddammit! Will it ever end? HE, I, Worked with an unparalleled intensity which left all else nonexistent. He scratched and picked at himself. The dripping, the picking, the work of his fingers in that sloppy hole. The sound. Unbearable to all those unfortunate enough to observe.

Silence.

All motion, all sound finished. He slowly peered around the room still oblivious to me and focused his attention on the desk in the corner for what seemed like a lifetime.

Violently he broke his gaze and returned to the perforation below his hand and gently held his lacerated vein between two fingers. He started to pull. I clenched my teeth and watched. He pulled harder. The skin started to tear. As it split the vein pulled through as does a wire through the sheetrock. A distinct meandering line of pain and suffering broke through his skin and left a void of waste and destruction. He held the blue tube, now, like a string attached to his inner elbow. On his face, amusement, confusion.

He held out the raw battered end of that vein to me as our eyes connected. He looked myself in the eye, and there I saw it. What I don't know. But I know now that I had moved beyond death. With no words I dived head first, like a cock into a cunt,

which had not received adequate attention, into this wormhole of myself. Pushing and squirming with no progress. Until that moment. That moment when one is accepted, invited, encouraged to enter. And down I went. As I traveled this tunnel between I and I the hail started to fall. It grew and grew and intensified. Though no pain was felt for this hail had previously been cross sectioned and seen in that remarkable way that only cross polarized lenses can see. And as if I were inside a glass dome this exquisitely colorful precipitation stuck just out of reach on all sides forming a swirling womb whose colors were divided by the femurs and ulnas of those lost.

I emerged out of the tunnel to catch the green flash of sunset reversing into that beautiful red half dome that can only be seen in a world too polluted to survive. Out of this dome grew a mushroom decaying the world back into itself. I watched the split second life span of this fungus from maturity to reproduction and as it withered into the nothingness of a man's ear I realized that I was now behind myself. Able to step back into the body I left behind as it stepped into the pond where I am standing now.

Now we depart. Back toward home after yet another Sunday mass.