

THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY

*"There are those who see the God above who never
knew the pain of bliss
And those like me who dream of love with one like
you on nights like this"*

"To this reviewer Francis belongs in the company of Henry Miller, Jack Kerouac, Hubert Selby Jr's 'Last Exit to Brooklyn' and J.P. ('The Ginger Man) Donleavy. Perhaps most important is that it reflects without self-pity and with extraordinary humour the writer's experience of maternal loss, drugs, near fatal accident and a battle for sanity."

- Bruce Abrahams, author of 'Shakespeare In Lust', several novels under pseudonym & reviewer at Erotic Review Magazine, on the contained novel

"His style is reminiscent of Henry Miller's semi-autobiographical novels - an admixture of philosophy, surrealism, mysticism and sex. I was mesmerized by the lyrical cadence, and the way the words, dance and prance at the writer's bidding. Whether his words do a crazy dance or a somber, meditative one, it was a pure delight keeping pace with his steps."

- Santosh Bakaya, Academician-poet-novelist-essayist-Ted Speaker, critically acclaimed for her poetic biography of Mohandas K Gandhi, 'Ballad of Babu'

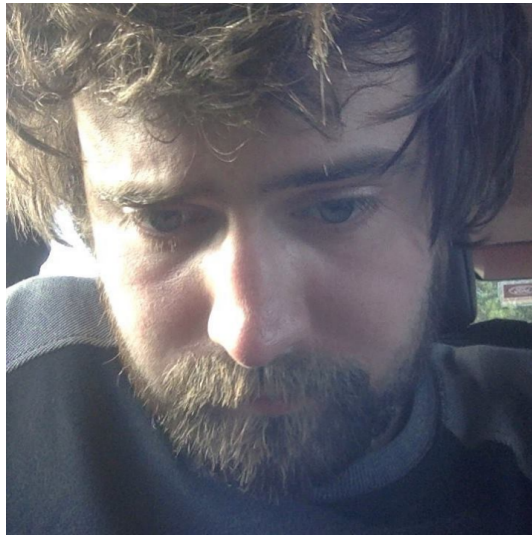
THE FINISHED, UNCENSORED
42,000 WORD NOVELLA

BY DOMINIC FRANCIS

the inauguration of insanity

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Dominic
Francis

**BORN ON
FEBRUARY
13TH, 1993.
DOMINIC
FRANCIS
ARRIVED AT
UNIVERSITY,
GOT KICKED
OUT AFTER
WRITING AN
ESSAY ABOUT**



**MARIJUANA, JUMPED OFF AN EIGHTY FOOT
BRIDGE & INTO A TWO-MONTH COMA, THEN
STARTED TO WRITE 'THE INAUGURATION OF
INSANITY' & SING HIS POEMS. HE WON THE
REUEL PRIZE FOR UPCOMING POET IN 2017.
HIS SONG 'FLU BLUES' WAS FEATURED ON A
BBC-WORD SERVICE PROGRAMME ABOUT
MENTAL HEALTH & MUSIC ALSO IN 2017. IT
HAS BEEN RUMOURED THAT TONNAN HAS
READ OVER 9 BOOKS & CAN PLAY GUITAR
SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN THE AVERAGE
PERSON BORN IN 1993. HE HAS BEEN
DIAGNOSED WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA, BIPOLAR
AND MANIC DEPRESSION.**

**THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
HAPPY TEARS IN LOVE WITH A COLD**

**CHAPTER 1:
A LOVE STORY WITH AN ENDING**

The following words articulate a tragicomedy that arrives in the guise of an erotic thriller gone wrong. They represent perhaps the only genuine parable that I've ever encountered. And as long as I live – be it for a day more or longer than forever & a month – the secret strings of my shattered soul will never let me forget their song. These words are like a bloody long love ballad, but they remind me, too, that everything and its mother must one day perish.

Every once in a while, a remarkable person takes centre stage in your life and that person seems to epitomise all the dreams that you deem sacred. When you're with that person, the world is exactly how you've always wanted it to be. Seldom is the stuff of your deepest desires transposed onto the canvas of reality, but this world is filled with any number of surprises and beautiful people. Yes, occasionally you grow to adore the essence of someone more than you thought physically possible, more than the rest of them put together, and more than love itself.

In this universe, such slapdash phrases

of exaltation might be considered more romantic than they are in the harsh and often highly obscure domain that I inhabit during the bulk of this story. Some folks on Restralardin believe love to be as endless as its ocean, but unlike the quantifiability of that ocean, I don't believe there's an upper limit to devotion.

Sometimes you love somebody too much for their liking and too much for your own good. Nonetheless, I guess I'm just a man who loved (& loves & always shall love) a woman, loved her more than he would care to admit. I can't forget, though, that like the ocean, this story has a material ending.

I guess it's best that I begin at the beginning: not at the beginning of my life, but at the beginning of my love, my undoing and the end of everything. The trilogy will unfold in present tense, during the vainglorious drama of the now. As the future becomes the present and the present becomes the past, a suspension of disbelief is necessary in order for this to make sense.

True love seems to me to be as endless as time itself and as ethereal as another world. I figure that the panting ghost of puppy love can't trigger, distort or contort your every endeavour forever: it can span forty days and forty nights, last as long as it takes a drunk Norwegian to recite the first fifty dozen digits of pi, or flicker as fleeting as a firework. At

some point, though, infatuation must end, diminishing into indifference or intensifying until it reaches the realms of real love.

Still, like an adolescent convinced his truth is truer than truth itself, I believe that chance and happenstance ordained the reality of my relationship with Xinx such that my feelings for her can't be substantiated by reason or rhyme. Somehow my love for her will reign forever fastened to the very core of my existent being despite the way that destiny will eventually separate our physical bodies. Naturally, I suppose this sort of love lasts a lifetime or, perhaps, even longer.

Oh, soul of mine! And you! Dear reader, dear friend! Can the heart be broken more than once? I bet it can, but if I were a better gambler, I'd be a better gambler. If I were a much better gambler, indeed, a third of this trilogy wouldn't have happened (& I'd be a millionaire to top it off!).

As a doctor-in-training and a lover, I've learnt that the only true antidote for the common cold or lovesickness is to ignore the negative properties of the ailment almost entirely. For instance, were you to be suffering from a cold, while it would be inadvisable to dive naked into the sub-zero water of the Tilkaras Ocean, you might find it in your best interests to have a spontaneous adventure in Winter Wonderland after appropriately

preparing yourself. In the same vein, if you love someone yet you don't know their middle name, you could ask them their middle name, but it'd be presumptuous to carve your initials and theirs on the Science Block bathroom wall to prove your ownership of that love and credentials as a bona fide typographer.

Also in the same vein, if you love someone yet don't know their eye colour, you could ask them if they want to hang out, but it'd be presumptuous to fashion a colour image of that person onto the Science Block bathroom wall to prove your ownership of that love and credentials as a bona fide portrait artist before you know this detail.

However, at Hobbling University one Sunday morning, Rockland, my friend and fellow medical undergraduate, will take it onto himself to do both of these latter things, carving onto the Science Block Bathroom wall the initials of Xinx – my lover at the time – and himself, next to which fashioning a warped impressionist likeness of them both.

When Rockland speaks, sometimes you can perceive what seems to be a glimmer of salvation deeply distant down the oceanic canyons of his dilated eyes. The flickering forensics of the forest-fire-glint behind those horn-rimmed spectacles make you feel

grateful to be acquainted with whatever clandestine, oblique message has been designed by his brain's body for your consumption. It makes *me* feel excited & born to die.

In balance, some might figure the gigantic glint in Rockland's eyes, which seem to me to possess a charming hint of some extraordinarily foreign perversion, to represent a trick of the light or a madman's bluff. Maybe, though, sometime erstwhile he did taste deliverance for himself and subsequently became addicted to its opulently inebriating tang. To me, it seems the man has known his share of infinitely naïve romances and realistic yet raucous hallucinations, such which only a puny percentage of the population is privy to. Today I can infer from his tired jovialness that he doesn't take the fact that he is talking to me for granted.

"314 minutes ago, in my golden 159 blazed brain..." Rockland begins, *"I ceased the vilification and viewing of the visual and auditory apparition of the crazy yet content copulation of Kleopatra and you (and by copulation, I mean fucking as hard as you could, fucking as if that were why you were alive, fucking so hard she was bound to produce quintuplets unless she took the pill afterwards: validating the victorious vulture of*

her vagina, praising the priestly prude of your penis and angelizing the artisan aristocrat of her anus, seemingly concluding with your exclamation of the ecstasy of eloping with Eve into her evangelist ears but then continuing onwards with the joint exploring and adoring of every pore in the mercenary mountains of each other's mouths), and then the vision gave way to my awestricken marvel at two haunting hallucinations – firstly of a slow serpentine blow job Kleopatra gave your knob and secondly of anal sex in a palace of riddles: firstly, at dark in the park by the meadows (where mourning magpies' melodies boomed as if they were responsible for the evacuation [or blooming] of chrysalises, and then diminished in decibels as if conspiring to never be heard again like a deleted demo of the time-travelling sperm of the future Rock & Roll Legend cum President of the World) under the tree Kleopatra and you favoured for no particular reason, where she practically sterilised you by licking around the top of your cock and caressing it in the cosy chasm of her mouth, repeating this rhythmically with such regularity you came home with her because that was where you lived; secondly, and this one tugged my heart apart like a horse and cart pulling it in a gallop towards the only infinity possible (for though infinity is infinite there is only one infinity), she seductively stated that she is Satan and that if she made

you orgasm you would be responsible for the deaths of thousands of thousands of unborn babies. You didn't say a word, for you weren't willing to continue this religious line of conversation. Kleopatra then recited the Lord's prayer to you, pointing at you when she said 'Father', henceforth declaring you the Father of yourself, her own Father and my Father as if it were a gospel truth, then stroked your frigidly cold cock with her feet for an accelerated month, red toenails and dyed beige hair growing in a simulated eternity with weight being lost in both your images, until she parks her humungous arse on top of your erect cock, her hole submerges it and you fuck until your hair turns grey: by then, 234,000,000 unborn babies were dead." Rockland lets out a deep, gratuitous sigh.

"Great. Cool story, Rockland. I liked your use of language. But who the hell is Kleopatra?" I ask.

"I don't know. I hadn't seen her face before. Kleopatra was really pretty, if a little... uh... strangely stoic... yeah, strangely stoic is the phrase," Rockland says.

I will think, ten years from now, that Xinx is the first & last person I have ever fallen in love with.

Yes, Xinx is beautiful & beautifully free & freely frivolous! She is half-black, half-azure, and has tresses of parrot-blue hair. I meet Xinx at the Hobbling University Fresher's disco. She was wearing bright pink lipstick and an 8pm dress, both of which compliment her magnificent yet unobtrusive breasts. She's studying Classics. She likes reading, and I've never met anyone who likes reading but is stupid. She likes conversations about death (or maybe I do).

The second I see her there, almost everything else became irrelevant to me, and I go up to talk to her.

"Why don't you put your heart on the line and invite me to your room?" she asks after we've talked a while. I invite myself to hers instead. Although I don't know at this point that this is the woman I will want to spend the rest of my life with, I feel very positive about any scenario involving her.

Following some deep small-talk, I place my hands around my neck and strangle myself while screaming like a baby about my drinking problem (an ancient mating call in Restralardin). Then, at once, Xinx leans towards me & we kiss passionately, occasionally pausing to allow me to further vent my feelings towards alcohol. The air is almost amorous, you know, and I daresay it's dreamy, too. Whenever I strangle myself and

scream like a baby about my drinking problem, typically in a jiffy I'll be making out with a nearby feminist for a couple of hours. I've been told that this particular act is not a very 'cool' thing to do, but I don't drink, strangle myself or scream too often. I'm quite a quiet guy, usually.

"Is it difficult to remember?" Xinx wonders aloud after the final end of my iambic monologues, pulling away from me slightly.

"It's easier to forget than remember," I reply, sweat trickling from my brow.

"People always enter a situation with the intention of remembering exactly what happens, but then the minutes blur into one another like madmen chasing miracles," Xinx says. *"I'm glad you could share your thoughts on your drinking problem with me tonight, and I'm sure you will one day become a member of the proletariat as you forecast."*

It's not like me to prophesise – that's more up Rockland's alley – but sometimes I feel the urge to do so as well.

"Do you have any literary aspirations, yourself?" I ask Xinx, keen to change the subject.

"No!" she says, indignantly, as if that were the last thing on her mind, and she kisses me again. Her tongue is tantalizingly dexterous in its movements around my mouth and mine is equally as ravenous in its slow-fast migration around hers. She places a hand

carefully on my ribcage and then through my jeans she caresses my love, which stiffens even more at her touch. I'm not a particularly good kisser – I've kissed only twelve girls in the previous three years, and Xinx is the second one with lipstick – but I find her pink lipstick to be so alluring I silently vow to myself that if I get to choose which day is Groundhog's Day, this would be that day.

"Let's fuck!" she says decisively, lying down on the single bed, stretched out as seductive as Sadist Soothsayer's sister who happened to be my first celebrity crush and with a sexy ostentation to match (though the singer's sister passed away when I was fourteen, her image reminds me of Xinx's).

"Sure," I say, as I get on top of her with my clothes on. *"Do you have a condom?"*

"I don't believe in condoms..." she says and sticks her tongue as far as it can fit into my ear-socket, before elaborating, *"I attend a church that doesn't value condoms as a form of contraception. I'll take a pill tomorrow. I promise I keep most of my promises."*

There's a clause to both of these last two sentences: firstly, she said she'd take a pill tomorrow (what pill?) and secondly, she promised she keeps most of her promises (she hadn't promise me a thing except that).

But bigger, more voluptuous matters soon occupy my fixated, aroused mind. With her black strapless dress pressed tight against

her bronzed skin, I massage each bosom. Her hand, to my delight, heads south to my penis, brushing against it then retreating, brushing against it a little harder, then retreating.

My knowledge of the application and removal of female clothing is limited but from what I gather it isn't too different from male clothing, in that the principle is the same: it comes off the opposite way to which it goes on. Irrespective of this technicality, I strip until I am stark naked and as she eyes the abs I managed to maintain over the Summer, she removes her dress and bra until she is only wearing crimson underwear. For some reason, I find women most attractive when they are only wearing underwear. Any more nudity than that is less inviting: the enticement of the unknown beckons like a spliff on the pavement.

Anyway, I pull down Xinx's knickers and I lick all around her vulva, one hand still feeling a boob. She groans happily and comes a little, then comes a lot as my tongue nears the G-spot. I continue doing this for a minute or so and then I move upwards and suck her left tit while fingering her vagina.

"Do you want to fuck me now or do you want a blowjob?" she whispers tantalisingly in my ear. Five hours after Rockland's sexually charged 'performance art', my *actual* cock begs for relief: I'd love a blowjob, which to me is the highest conceivable pleasure.

“Blow me and afterwards I’ll make you orgasm again when I can properly concentrate. Then we’ll fuck in the morning,” I whisper back, half-jokingly.

“Relax,” she replies quickly with devilish certainty. *“I know every trick in the book.”*

She holds my balls in one hand and my penis with the other. She licks the tip of my penis and then her two pursed lips, which are now a slightly faded shade of pink, softly engulfs its head, transferring a barely finite ration of pleasure to my loins. She licks up and down my shaft slowly and steadily. Then, in an end to the exceptionally gratifying torture, she submerges most of my penis in her mouth. She gives me one of those sloppy blowjobs you might have read about in one of your earthly magazines – Reader’s Digest perhaps – always sensing when I am about to orgasm and then disengaging.

This continues for about ten minutes and I am drooling slightly at her elegant physique, until I find the will to tell her to stop, for I realise I don’t really want to orgasm but instead fuck her so hard she believes she is at one of your earthly sporting events – the Olympics perhaps – and will remember this as the day she won the game for the crowd at home.

“I like to think of my mouth as a cavern that collapses in on any intruders,” she says in

a chatty tone, while she masturbates me and I finger her.

"Ah! But isn't that what a vagina is for?" I inquire.

"Well, yes. I don't think you're as autistic as you implied before. I think you're a druggie!" Xinx says. Then, without my permission she finger-fucks my arsehole, a region that has never been explored before (except by the act of defecating & cleaning). I am not going to try to explain the sensation to the reader, so if he or she is curious as to its effects, he or she will have to experiment with his or her own body.

I penetrate her fanny, which is wet, tight and holier than I previously imagined. My penis remains there for ten seconds, barely moving, and then she clenches her cunt. After I regain control of my desire, I chain-fuck her as hard as I can, with retaliatory stamina even I am surprised by in retrospect.

"God! God! Yes. Yes!" she utters breathlessly.

"Fuck. Fuck! Don't finger my arse again!" I say, though I realise it does make me quite horny. I thrust, thrust and thrust my cock into that homely squelchy nest: thrust, thrust and thrust to the twentieth power. I had got good at mediating my desire to ejaculate through some practice with a close female friend of mine two months before. It's fair to say that there is consistent eye-contact between

Xinx and I throughout this fuckery, which I've read is important during sex.

"God, yes! GOD yes!" she moans, biting my neck, which combined with her sexy Costunion accent and her own surprising thrusts upwards, makes me positively explode inside her after we've fucked a while. We had made quite a lot of noise, but it was the first night at University, so what did you expect? A hunt for needles by the fucking railway track?

She has a shower, then I have a shower, then we go to sleep together.

"Good night, Xinx," I say.

"Good night, Tonnan," she says.

Not another word is spoke between us until the next day. Nothing needs to be voiced and so nothing is voiced. I fall asleep almost immediately, spooning her.

Who could guess that my humanistic hubris & penchant for women would merely serve to accelerate my downfall?

**THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
HAPPY TEARS IN LOVE
WITH A COLD**

**CHAPTER 2:
COCONUT MACAROONS & THE
BLACK CAT**

I dream I am sitting on a chair in my parent's garden and I see a skinny, pitch-black cat scurry across the fence, as if that is the fence's purpose, with such natural agility it'd not be a surprise to me if it suddenly broke into song. Just as this crosses my mind, the cat stops its journey, turns to me, and winks. The dream dissolves. Later that night, I have a similar vision of the same black cat. It looks at me and shakes its head as if in disapproval. I can't determine its gender, not that it matters: to me, the cat may as well be genderless.

I wake up: 8 A.M. I always wake up at 8 A.M or roundabouts. Xinx is to my left, face against the pillow. She doesn't look very comfortable. I just lie there, staring at the wall. The alarm goes off a little later. It's one of those retro alarms, a big clock, and it buzzes decisively at 8:10. Xinx looks at me sleepily and smiles. She kisses me on the lips, and I feel her bosoms with both hands, massaging them as if they are playdough. She reciprocates, toying with my balls. We have tantric sex for a couple

of hours, exchanging and memorising each other's numbers during the proceedings, then we go to our separate lectures: mine is 'The Northern Philosophy to Medicine', in which a short green man with crutches is lecturing. I am chosen to answer a question after volunteering. I answer, and the lecturer nods his head, saying "*Hey, you're right young man!*" And everyone claps. Some people even cheer. It's the second greatest moment of the day for me.

I'm on my way back to my room and by the entrance to the Humanities building I spot a black cat, who looks startlingly similar to the one I witnessed in dreamtime earlier. The black cat yawns majestically and vehemently as if it is about to explode and fatigue has overruled its will to live. It inclines its head ominously when it sees me walk past, urgently moves towards me until it appears to think better of this idea and rushes to retreat into a nearby bush. I don't think a lot about my sighting of the cat at first, but later in the day I consider the potential merging of dreams and reality.

It occurs to me that I haven't eaten for some time, so I go to the Union supermarket to get some food. While I'm in the sandwich and drink aisle, an attractive but weird looking woman eyes me up and whispers the word "*angel*" to me in a gasp of twenty decibels. I

don't react, because I'm not sure if or how I should react. To react would either make me complicit in the deception or destroy the illusion completely. I want neither. I will still think about this happening sixty years on, from time to time. I feel it as surreal as the invention of the one-wheeled automobile.

I buy a cheese sandwich, some groceries & some milk, and go to eat the sandwich in my kitchen, where Rockland and Rebecca are finishing making sausages and mash. Neither are qualified to cook this food without the assistance of the trusty student cookbook.

Rockland & Rebecca existing in the same room as one another has not yet disintegrated into obstinate small talk about their respective courses. They are still in the phase of furtively touching and tentatively flirting with each other. It seems that it hasn't occurred to them that the very first person each of them met at University might not be their match-made-in-heaven, just like it doesn't occur to me at that point that Rockland might poison my affair with Xinx with an injection of adrenaline that proves to rival my smooth awkwardness.

Rebecca had bought some coconut macaroons and shares them with Rockland. She places them on the table, enticingly close to our persons. Personally, if I were them, having a coconut macaroon so close to my

body would tempt me into skipping the comparatively uninviting main meal of overcooked sausages and mash, but my favourite foods are cheese-based or sugar-based and my opinion on the matter doesn't make the slightest difference. Me, I'm feeling a little depressed after the taste of the sandwich fades from my mouth, and I need something to make me feel better, so I peer at a macaroon. Eventually I get the feeling of déjà vu from staring at it for so long, so after a nod from Rebecca, I plunk it my mouth and begin to chew. It tastes delectable and expensive, satisfying a craving for coconuts I didn't think I had.

"Ah! I don't think I've ever had a macaroon before. Exquisite! Thank you," I say honestly.

"I doubt you have. These grew in Neonadra," she says.

"Grew? I don't think macaroons grow," I fire back. Macaroons are neither mushrooms nor mince-meat, I think, and look to Rockland for support, who immediately shakes his head upon recruitment to the correct side.

"No, Rebecca, I don't know how you could be so egocentric as to assume that macaroons grow," Rockland says, still shaking his head in disapproval, with his whole body swaying as well. I wonder if this is Rockland's way of trying to seduce Rebecca.

"It's a human right to be born and it's a

human right to die. I thought this was afforded to Macaroons. Macaroons are not made from materials, like iron or cauliflower,” Rebecca says in an educative tone and nods her head with her whole body inclining, just as I consider whether I should go to find the black cat and Rockland realises Rebecca has got another thing wrong.

“Iron doesn’t grow and neither do Macaroons, Rebecca. Gosh, I didn’t know you could be so wrong about something,” says Rockland, hiccupping hysterically. It’s at this point that I decide to leave the kitchen, because I realise that Rockland is receiving a foot job from Rebecca.

Rockland is a man who prospers when left alone: his spirit is driven by amphetamine nights bawling at random tombstones after stints of drinking at the Old Horse, sober days spent courting the spirit world in underwear, weeded weekends writing long love letters he claims communicate the inexpressible, and other larks like lethargically lulling a lady late in labour in the library.

Rockland wears expensive metallic glasses, often paired with a princely purple vest, a denim jacket, chinos and a scarf; his nose is a mammoth landscape of blackheads sandwiched in between his eyes (which are a little too small for his face in light of his nose’s enormity).

My feelings towards Rockland... well, they are not always amiable or homosexual in nature, though at times they are both. Our friendship isn't marked by any commonality but a respective longing for something (something that I cannot define & that I know he has but I don't) and a longing for stability, which I happily supply as I have the inkling my longing for whatever this something entails will be repaid in kind. And in some ways, it will be, to beautiful yet tragic avail.

I watch television in the lounge for the next half an hour. There is a white guy on the news who can read a novel in ninety minutes. He says he reads the sentence all at once. I thought that this was how anyone but the most laidback of housewives read as they pause mid-sentence to drink tequila or think about their loved ones. Then I realise he must mean absorbing all the sentence at once: isn't that how most people read most sentences? Stranger and stranger. It's an ambiguous remark, anyway. Maybe I'm not intelligent enough to even understand what he is saying. I wonder why I am at University. It takes me at least a couple of hours to read a novel; it'd take me a whole afternoon to read *'War Makes Peace'*, which he claims to have read in a mere five hours.

I'm still hungry but don't want to make things awkward by going to get more

macaroons from my kitchen, which though infested by a couple of people touching each other is still my kitchen. I sigh. I decide to go looking for the black cat.

It doesn't take long to find him, and it is a him, because he and his half-erect willy appear auspiciously as soon as I open the front door. He moseys up to me and seems to be weighing something up in his mind.

I'd say I am normal in my loathing of the smell of shit. Certainly, better to have no smell than smell like shit, unless it's holy shit. But this cat smells like regular shit, so I pick him up, carry him to the bathroom, and bathe him.

It takes a fair bit of convincing for him to allow me to perform the ritual. I wonder what this cat has done to arrive in such a sticky, shitty situation. But halfway through the rinsing process, I get arrested. Some cop with a fucking stun-gun turns up. Anyway, next thing you know it, I'm captive in a police van heading towards Hobbling town centre, due to the fact that I had attempted to wash an apparently homeless cat. The cat, presumably, is left to his migrant ways.

I cry a little. My handcuffs stop me from drying the tears in my eyes and I don't want to embarrass myself by asking the white guy to tissue my eyes.

This will go on my permanent record, I think; maybe I shouldn't become an opium

dealer. I tried to question the officer: surely, there must have been some kind of misunderstanding... this was not an actual kidnapping but an attempt to right nature's wrongs.

"You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be held against you," says the unsympathetic cop. This makes me feel like a proper criminal.

We arrive at the police station, a two-storey building that does just what it says on the tin (except for in cases whose nature the justice system has disregarded, such as my own). The cop shows me to a cell. It is twelve-foot by twelve-foot, about quadruple my height, and empty but for a large piece of shit.

If we carve our respective destinies out of our actions, then I'm certainly the party responsible for the orchestration of my imprisonment. I can't say that I had secretly willed this sequence of events to occur but, still, carved them I had. Nonetheless, over the course of the next twenty minutes I grow hungrier and hungrier, but the only option is a piece of rank shit, and that doesn't seem particularly appetizing to my refined pallet which is now accustomed to such culinary delights as a cheese sandwich or a macaroon.

In the police cell, I stare at the piece of shit until a sense of hungry déjà vu pervades the essence of my being, so I decide to eat the piece of shit. It tastes worse than it looks, and I would advise anyone else in similar circumstance to simply starve to death instead. I wouldn't go so far as to justify my foray into shit-eating by saying I would die without the shit's nutrients but, then again, that's exactly what I'm doing now.

As if on cue, after I finish my food, and I am lithe to call it 'food' given it's a piece of poop, an officer unlocks the cell door and enters the room. It seems that I have passed some sort of test. Unlike the white guy who was on television, this officer is a black woman who wasn't on television.

"Good. Very good. I hope you're proud of yourself..." the officer says slowly & flatly, as if addressing her disobedient pet canine who has just attempted a new trick. *"I suppose,"* she adds with an air of pitying sadism, *"it'll be up to me to get you some water. You need to have a shower, as well."*

I don't immediately know what to say to this, so I smile stupidly at her, my teeth fetchingly brown. Both agenda items addressed in her speech ring true to me. I do need some water to wash the shit down, and two hours of tantric sex with anyone is enough to warrant a shower.

"Okay. I'd like some proper food too. I'm

starving;” I eventually say, coldly, hoping to gauge the situation. I decide to keep it cool; I’m glad that my words sound cold.

“*What do you fancy?*” she asks.

“*What is there?*” I inquire in turn.

“*Lasagne, Cottage Pie, Extra Special Vegetable Lasagne, Beef...*” she starts firmly, and though it seems as if the list could continue for some time, all the items sound better than a raw piece of shit, so I interrupt her here.

“*Extra Special Vegetable Lasagne, please,*” I say.

“*Right away, sir.*” She winks at me derisively.

If I’m right, this black woman has the hots for me, but maybe she’s just mocking me to amuse herself.

She leaves the cell and locks it. During the time she is gone, I question the authenticity of my situation – am I really in a jail cell for cleaning a cat, and if so, what penalties can befall my person for committing such an act?

The black woman police officer, who at this point I realise is kind of hot herself, returns five minutes later with a ready meal and water, clutched like a crucifix over her breasts.

“*An Extra Special Vegetable Lasagne, for our Extra Special guest...*” she says sardonically, biting her upper lip.

"Thank you," I say, in as gracious a voice as I can garrison.

I drink the water appreciatively and proceed to devour the food, which I think surprisingly tasty for a ready-meal and can certainly be categorised as food. I had been informed of the benefits of ready meals by my uncle before arriving at University, perhaps to compensate for my family's general lack of cooking tutorial.

About halfway through the food, I notice that the black woman officer, who was kind of hot, has a whip in her hand.

I look at her identification, which is on a lapel on her police uniform.

"Maggie," I say, *"what the fuck is this about?"*

"Slow dancer: it's the pay-off..." she says quietly, almost to herself, as if pondering one of the world's enigmas.

"Seriously, Maggie, a fucking whip?" I say in a tone of castrated fear.

"Oh," she says, apparently taken aback, *"I thought I'd bring it in case my line of questioning didn't get far."*

"Line of questioning? Geez, Maggie, all I did was fucking clean a cat."

"Oh. Oh. There seems to be a mistake. I read that you kidnapped and assaulted a cat," she says, her tongue leaving her mouth a couple of more times than necessary.

"Kidnapped? Assaulted? If adopting"

counts as kidnapping and cleaning counts as assaulting, then I suppose I..." I start, but at this point, Maggie, the hot middle-aged black female police officer of the law, pouts and whips me on the chest. The Extra Special Vegetable Lasagne goes everywhere. It hurts like a stomach-ache would, only all the pain comes to try to assassinate you at once.

"You assault University property, then you insult the law. If you insult the law, the law has every right to assault you," Maggie states quickly and factually, as if reciting small print.

"Maggie, I..." I protest, but it is of no use.

She nimbly pushes me to the ground, handcuffs me and proceeds to milk me, masturbating me up and down and up and down and up and down like I'm a hormonal cow.

Though I weakly continue my protest by groaning, in a minute I orgasm, after which she showers me like I had showered the cat (with a little affection and an affected aura of tedium, using a showering apparatus that I hadn't noticed before).

Maggie cackles hysteria as she does this as if she has just heard the third funniest knock-knock joke in the world (Knock, knock! Who's there? Doctor. Doctor Who? Yes, I am he!).

"So... uh... how did you come to be a policewoman?" I ask feebly, more out of

curiosity than a desire to spark small talk.

And so, Maggie's relatively long and relatively boring story starts. Whether you are reading this aloud or not, you should note that Maggie's voice is quite deep when she spoke about serious matters, sterilised by police protocol in the middle-range and girlishly high when she is excited.

"There's a crucial difference between wishing to have long hair while you have short hair and wishing to have short hair while you have long hair: the former is easily achievable in the course of the next year or so and the latter is mere minutes away... if you happen to have medium hair length, then this is a good compromise and no further action is required (that is, protein pills or scissors)," Maggie states in a tone that suggested she is being knowingly longwinded in her verbal reasoning.

"Then again," she continues absentmindedly, *"there is a crucial difference between touching the King on the face and touching the image of the King on the face. With that said, I don't even like to touch the image of the King on the face. No, I fear His Majesty just wouldn't enjoy that."*

Although I recently orgasmed, I'm almost sorry I asked, because I'm keen to get the hell out of jail as I have some work to do at University, so I say, *"Your point being,*

Maggie?"

"Well, I thought you'd ask that. The story is not a long one or a short one," she says and gives me this perceptive maternal glance which makes me feel both a little uncomfortable and kind of guilty.

"What story?" I question, now less angry and more confused, and keener to present the front of being interested.

"This story. The story I am in the middle of telling."

"Concerning hair length, the King and your employment?" I ask.

"Yes. I am glad you are paying attention. Anyway, when I was around seven or eight years old, my hair had grown very long – three-foot-long – and my father got out his measuring tools – a ruler – and the whole enterprise of measuring got me quite excited, and my hair was twice the length of the ruler. I loved my hair more than I loved any other form of life – is hair a form of life? To cut a long story short, he told me that I must have a haircut, or I'd risk balding. I played along, thinking he wouldn't know how to cut my hair, but we went to the hairdressers. After the cut, when I looked at myself in the mirror, I laughed hysterical with sadness. I couldn't believe my eyes. The hair cut was much shorter than I could have possibly imagined, barely shoulder length. I decided that this was a form of child abuse... I would get my

retribution, and he would feel the full force of the law."

"And so, you became a police officer?"

"A lot later, yes, but that was a little after I met the Queen."

"What? You met the Queen?"

"You'll mock me for saying this, but she is like the father I never had," she says factually. "I met her at the circus. I kissed her hand, she said that it was a joy to meet me, and that was that. She was sitting next to me. She cheered with... how should I say this... these days, after such a meeting with the Queen I don't hesitate in ensuring that my use of language is correct... I suppose she cheered vehemently, if a person can cheer vehemently."

"Gee, Maggie, I didn't know you liked the circus," I say.

"Tonnán – if that is your real name – I love the circus, but not as much as I love the Queen or Sujes, my Lord," she says in a flirtatiously flirty tone.

"Great. Cool story, Maggie." I say.

"That was the beginning and middle of the story. Do you want to hear the end of the story? The Royal Family features again, but it's kind of supplementary to the point that I'm making."

"Not now, Maggie. I have to get back to work," I say.

“Okay,” she says reluctantly, “I’ve always held to the idea that you should treat others as you would like to be treated. So, how about a ride back to the campus?”

“Well, that sounds fantastic,” I say, feeling like Ricky Mantle for some reason. Sure enough, Maggie is a woman of her word and soon we are in a police car heading back to Hobbling campus.

“Hey, Maggie, can you put the siren on please? I’ve always wanted to be in a police car with the siren on,” I ask her as the car swims through the darkening suburbs, out of the metropolis and into greenery.

“Sure, Tonnan... in fact, the sound of the siren was one of the reasons I trained to become a police officer. And that’s the end of the story,” Maggie says happily and perhaps a little patronisingly for the story is not really a story at all. But the wee-awe-wee-awe sound accompanies us for the ten-minute journey, so I am happy. I kiss her on the cheek when we arrive outside my halls of residence and she jumps up in shock, hitting her head on the police-car roof.

“Oh, sorry, Maggie,” I tell her and mean it.

“It’s alright!” She giggles sheepishly with a casual air of alertness. “Occupational hazard.”

“See ya, Maggie,” I say.

“Catch ya on the flip-side,” she says, and though I expect her to flip me off, she happily

awards me with the peace sign. I give it back to her and wave goodbye.

I don't know, at this point, that someday soon I will be waving goodbye to Restralardin & its stifling black 'n' white politics altogether.

**THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
HAPPY TEARS IN LOVE
WITH A COLD**

**CHAPTER 3:
STUPID IS AS STUPID DOES**

My three hours in jail done and dusted, I can barely imagine what will happen next, and I don't need to, for reality's algorithms are such that time moves in a linear fashion, pushing onwards, pushing infuriatingly, thankfully, and undeterrably onwards, despite a staggering universal number of births and deaths per second.

Ultimately, I figure that all of the Universes are slowly moving towards their death, an ending that will be the very antithesis to their start. This reasoning is primarily derived from my often-nonsensical conversations with Rockland regarding their expansion.

It so happens that, speaking of expanding matter and Rockland, at this moment the man himself appears to offer his opinion on Xinx: her weight, race, attractiveness & position as a person of the opposite gender who has kissed me.

"Hey man! I heard the sound of sirens and figured they were there to emit your return," says Rockland, and before I can reply,

he continues speaking, *"I saw you went home with that fat half-caste chick last night. Well done, dude. She was hot."*

"Well, Rockland, I hope she still is. I didn't notice that she was fat, and the phrase 'half-caste' is outdated and apparently discriminatory. Consider that poet in the WSB anthology, the 'half-caste symphony' one," I say.

Rockland strokes his temple thoughtfully, grimacing slightly. He nods then salutes me. *"Well, as a poet my respect for time is determined by the amount of lyrical gravity behind each statement."* He shrugs sarcastically, then cottons onto the fact I think he is being a dickhead and says, *"Anyway, apologies for what you perceived as my inappropriate comments about last night."*

"Hey, I didn't expect an apology! You're lucky I didn't contact Rebecca's mother and ask her if you had permission to wed her father," I joke, in characteristic feebleness. My witticisms at this point are influenced by the brash humour of an Enodrian woman I spent time with. She didn't break my heart but she'll half yours too! Yeah, those kinds of gags: jokes that internally bleed. That girl would tell me my dreams and then make them come true with the movement of her tongue and small soft hands. But like most teenage affairs, that relationship deflated suddenly like a popped balloon, vaporised like snow to fire.

“Enough about eternal love and eternal return, man!” Rockland says caustically, with a surprising degree of animosity. I look at him uneasily, but he nods at me reassuringly.

“Let’s get high tonight. I like to ride the light with no one to guide and nothing to hide. Now that I know Rebecca, I feel so alive. I can’t believe it took this long to become my insides,” he sighs mysteriously.

“I didn’t know you were a poet, Rockland,” I tell him.

“Well, Tonnán, hopefully I still am a poet... the Frolid language can be utilised in such a way that you can exchange a simple word such as ‘use’ for ‘utilise’. My knowledge of this fact, combined with my use of ‘utilise’, is certainly enough to cement my reputation as an E-century poet...” Rockland says, shaking his head slightly and then pointing eastward, seemingly towards another accommodation. *“We can smoke it that way, in yonder woods.”*

“And you have procured said drugs already?” I ask him.

“One thing you should know about me, Tonnán, is that I don’t play the victim. If I want love, I will get love. If I want to sound like a poet, I will sound like a poet... besides, I don’t do drugs, I do ganja...” Rockland says, inspiring, though perhaps a tad psychopathically.

“Right. When do you want to smoke?” I ask.

“ASAP... pronto... right now...” he declares, and for the first time – and not the last time – I feel something that could be called arousal due to his joy-de-vivre.

“Follow me,” he says, and leads me towards the woods in a saunter bordering on a skipping run.

We arrive at the lake, a wooden enclave of dark greenery. We light up, Rockland takes three quick puffs, then he hands the joint to me and four separate yet almost singular coughs later, I am as high as a kite and notice that the moon is eerily full. Rockland observes me looking at it.

“I met the moon many years ago. It was my first auditory hallucination. It said ‘I’m your cousin’s mamma. That makes me your Auntie. Did you sleep with my sister?’ and immediately, instinctively I answered ‘yes,’” Rockland says.

“Wow. That’s a profound experience to have,” I say. *“But doesn’t that mean you slept with your mum?”*

“Well... the way I see it, there are people with parents and people who are born orphans. I fit into the second category. My mum and I... well... we stay away from each other.”

“But not because you slept with her or she passed away?”

“No... anyway, this is just what I told the

moon," he says, handing me a half-smoked spliff.

"Thanks. Are you Schizophrenic?" I inquire.

"Only when I want to be. I don't mind it. It mothers me. She doesn't mind it either."

Rockland chuckles, nodding to the moon affectionately and coughing, though he wasn't smoking. "Come up to my room; we can take acid and talk about your assault charge," he says.

As soon as we get there, he picks up an acid tab from his drawer and puts it in his mouth. "What strikes me most about this whole 'Reality' ordeal is that if you are not me you are someone else or something else. Stupid is as stupid does." And he throws his hands up exasperatedly, as if he is stating a circular reason.

"I follow you," I offer, though I don't know where I follow him.

"I... uh... I have something to tell you. This acid is a truth serum."

"Okay. I'm all ears. Could I have some acid as well?"

"How about you decide whether you still want to take acid after I tell you what I have to say? If you could do that, it would be helpful."

"How about you tell me what you have to say after I've taken acid?"

"Okay, Tonnan. But really, I am the

victim of your public sexual extravagance. You're the Darting Duck to my Hugo Hepner," he says apparently randomly, laughing sarcastically then genuinely, probably at the sound of his sarcastic laughter. He goes to his drawer and gets another tab. Imprinted on it is the image of Darting Duck. I know I can't be discriminatory based on the artistic virtues of the emblem on my acid tab, but for some reason I am really glad the emblem is not Massive Mouse; that mouse in particular, out of all the family of cartoon rodents, really creeps me out – he's just too big and obnoxious. I take the tab, placing it under my tongue.

"You had something to tell me?" I ask, somewhat taken aback, startled already at what could only be the placebo effect, which comes to form as a purple circle above Rockland's head, some kind of halo.

"I'm going to fuck Xinx. Do you mind?" he asks in a way that makes it seem like he really cares what the answer is, though in actuality it's nigh-impossible that he does.

Sure, I mind. I mind a lot. The fact that he is even asking me is a little odd though. I don't know what to say, so I just look at him, sort of shell-shocked.

"Remember Kleopatra?" Rockland asks, as if trying to reason with me with the characteristic degree of seriousness he imbues his 'visions' with.

“Gee, Rockland, I don’t know what to say,” I say, internally wondering when the effects of the acid I’d taken are truly going to kick in, for I’ve concluded that Xix would not probably sleep with Rockland. The purple halo had lingered only briefly over Rockland’s head.

“Half an hour from now, you’ll see the world in an altered way,” Rockland says sagely, reading through the words of all the letters that my mind wrote like a palm reader.

I wonder a little afterwards whether his previous bizarre vision could have possibly triggered the totality of the sadness and madness that followed in its wake: maybe, in some way, the hallucinated visual image of my body having sex with a woman called Kleopatra symbolised a kind of licence that endorsed or sanctioned or at least permitted him to have an affair with Xinx.

At my sixth form, as soon as I kissed any given girl, they were automatically next party’s *femme de jour*, and some of the guys would make a pass at her. Even some of the girls would: it was a farcical tradition, thinking about it. Over time, I grew a slight victim complex because of this, but it was nice to always kiss the girl before my peers did; it was like being a trendsetter, the first to check out the best new coffee house in town, the one who was vegan before eating vegetables was considered cool.

“Okay. Cheers. I’m going to go now,

buddy. While I'm here, though, I should say that I'm not sure you should be taking these visions to heart. I mean, I don't think what you saw was me, I don't know anyone called Kleopatra... and I don't think you should be trying to get off with Xinx. Bros before hos and all that. Also, you said she was fat..." I say.

"Sure, whatever, forget about it," he laughs nonchalantly. *"I wish you, too, luck with Xinx. Quite the catch. Only a little bit fat, half-black and with huge Babylon."*

"Good luck with Rebecca," I say sarcastically but without a suggestion of sarcasm in my voice, shaken and lying in a sense. Though I do wish the man success in his relationship with Rebecca, I wonder whether my establishment of their 'relationship' means that I have fallen prey to some sort of pseudo-paternal bluff by Rockland, a basic psychological warfare trump card. The way that man conducts himself is evocative of a witch doctor!

I go back to my room. I'd only been there a few minutes, thinking about what Rockland had said, when a student leaflet advertising 'A Freudian Masterclass on "Breakfast with the Leader"' slides under the door. Shit. Not only was I just thinking about how Rebecca looks like my mum, 'Breakfast with the Leader' is one of my favourite films.

And my mum's too.

And then the acid starts working. I put the leaflet on my table, and then lie in bed. I stare at the wall. I should be completing my assignment of memorising the bottom half of the periodic table of elements, but I can already recite most of it. I think about Xinx's phone number, realise I still know it and smiled contently. I can picture her now. I imagine our phone conversation.

Hi Xinx, it's Tonnan.

Hello!

And then the acid starts working.

NANNOT STI XNIX IH.

And then the acid really starts working. I wander tragically alone thru the fish-bait of coincidence, quickly figure out the great conspiracy that defines my social life at University, and then promptly forget it as I see a Santa-Paws shaped car. I get into the car in my mind and drive it into the Red House... then a female hen, a sister of sleep, locks me in jail. I dive into great valleys of consciousness, invent a few useless household appliances, bathe in whirlpools of supposition and then tread down the boulevard of wakefulness like a disused whistle that craves the mouth of its master.

I grab my notebook from the shelf and write in barely legible letters: *'I'm telling you. Something's going on. People... they're not all that good.'* Then I climb their stares down to

bed and collapse. The Lokona dollar bill appears in my mind's eye. Shit. Someone's got in it for me. They're onto me. They're onto me, but what I have done? I fruitlessly try to figure it all out for a few minutes. Then my phone rings. It's Xinx. I recognise the number. I must have said that number out loud hundreds of times.

"Hello, is this Tonnan?" Xinx says.

"Hi Xinx, Tonnan speaking," I say.

"Sup, homey?" she says in a conspiratorial tone.

"I had mind-blowing sex with this girl, then everyone clapped, then I ate macarons, then I cleaned a cat, then I got arrested, then I took acid, then I uncovered a conspiracy, then I forgot the conspiracy, then I picked up this phone call," I tell her, anxiously.

"I hope that girl was me, I didn't clap and I'm a member of everyone, I love macarons, I hate cats, I never once got arrested, I have never taken acid, I hope I'm not part of the conspiracy that you forgot about, and here we are," Xinx says quickly.

Geez, this girl has a good short-term memory, I enthuse and remember.

"Cool. Anyway, how are you?" I say, dazedly.

"Good. Want to see me now?"

"Err... okay. Come over to mine? I'm in my room, J58."

"See you in a bit..." she says.

I go to the kitchen, where Rockland is microwaving a microwave meal. He doesn't seem in any mood to talk, so we just sit there. I tell him that Xinx is coming to see me here, he moves his lips in interest as if about to say something but thinks better of it, and soon Xinx walks through the kitchen door.

"Hi, it's Rockland," Rockland says calmly but with a sense of mortal urgency.

"What happened to Rockland?"

Kleopatra asks in Rockland's mind, with an air of happy yet patient concern.

"I AM ROCKLAND," Rockland practically shouts, loudly.

"Xinx," Xinx says, accommodatingly.

"Doctor-In-Training Rockland, I'll get you some water. Hi Xinx," I say.

"Hi Tonnar," she says, waving at me in a knowingly awkward way that is designed to cull discomfort but rather serves to increase it.

"I was born for macaroons," Xinx says out of the blue to Rockland as if discussing a subject of tragedy whilst eyeing his macaroons.

"I was born for love," Rockland said, self-pityingly inspecting his fingernails. I don't think that it would be possible for me to live like that, somehow unable to disguise my feelings, a human chameleon changing his behaviour based on drug-ordained judgement, a creature hopelessly chained to his desire, his instinct, his ownership, his love, his self-belief installed in his head by the hand of God and

the hand of God alone.

After delivering a glass of water to Rockland, I sit back and observe Xinx and Rockland. I recall Rockland's words on Xinx to me. Xinx *is* beautiful to look at, *if* a little chubby; no, she is beautiful to look at *and* a *little* chubby.

"*May I have a macaroon?*" she asks.

"*Be my guest,*" says Rockland.

Xinx munches on a macaroon, walks towards me with part of it still in her mouth, and we smooch for a while. She tastes great, like macaroon and Sachsgate toothpaste. Rockland gazes at us, smiling as if he is witnessing young love for the first time, as if he is the best man at our wedding, as if over the course of the next few weeks he won't murder my sense of self with his analogies, metaphors and aggrandisement of these visions he is apparently prone to having. For a while, it feels like I am kissing a demi-God, a celebrated virgin porn star.

I guess this is a story of teenage heartbreak that starts to reek of doomed love after any kind of close examination. Anyway, I'll tell you now how it will end: flesh, sensations and dead friendships.

So Xinx and I are kissing, and Rockland is inspecting his ready meal, when the fucking fire alarm goes off and we all have to rush

outside. We have so little warning (and my sexual dynamism, demarcated by hours – if not *days* of experience, is so persistent) that my jeaned boner remains his full length when we arrive outside. Nobody claps. Nobody cheers. But I wouldn't veto the appraisal that almost everyone is oblivious to His illustriousness.

Standing a little behind me, I notice that Rockland has acquired a notebook and pen during the evacuation process. He is sketching what looks to be an early human body.

"This universe is finite due to the fact that space itself exists..." Rockland says apparently to himself with some unease, as if this supposition is so controversial it could get him killed in one of the greatest academic institutions ever, *"... and so the grave realisation that infinity is but a fairy tale transpires and you must confront the paradox of your own condition: a being of his or her own time but still existent within a fraction of the total time, which may be limitless itself. If you multiply space by time, you reach a surplus of energy, which though finite can't feasibly be numerically defined. Anyway, I always figured the passage of time can be quantified by the amount of time thus far spent within this domain. Thus, for a new-born time passes slow-fast, because he or she has little concept of time."*

"Well," Xinx says, *"that too is one of the many paradoxes of being a pro-life vegan."*

"But you're not a vegan," I say to her, surprised by the sound of my own voice.

"Sure I am," she says sharply, and I realise she is pulling my leg. *"Almost all of the time I am vegan and that."*

"If you're not smoking, talking, writing, enjoying yourself or concocting a plan to escape a box, you are wasting your time,"

Rockland goes on. Though it will later crystallise in my head that he is a hedonistic heathen, I can't disagree with that point. In fact, according to Rockland's doctrine, I'm wasting time listening to him, which is quite accurate. He lights a cigarette and carries on as if our interruption to his compelling stream of consciousness had not happened.

"Since we are in a certain space rather than the totality of space, I can only assume we are self-aware bacteria within an organism..." Rockland continues, *"also, since time passes, not even God can live forever; otherwise there would be no time passing. Does this make sense to you? When the organism we're inside dies, we'll die, too."*

"Wow, Rockland, I knew you were a prophet, but I didn't think you were a heretic idiot as well," I say to him.

"Screw you, Tonnán," he says in mock-aggression. *"I am not a heretic."*

At this point I notice that the black cat has attended the evacuation process. He looks

really good; in fact, he looks great. I make to go up to him, when Rockland grabs my shoulder. *"Hey, dude, that doesn't happen to be the cat you kidnapped and assaulted, does it?"*

"Uh, no, Rockland..." I say to him, though of course it is. *"I like all different sorts of cats, okay?"*

And thus, with Rockland trotting amiably beside me, I walk up to the black cat, who bares his teeth and hisses upon first sighting of Rockland and his ungainly gait, then wags his tail happily and purrs ardently upon my arrival.

"Gee, Doctor-In-Training Tonnan, that animal loves you!" Rockland says.

"Rockland, please stop using offensive language. How would you feel being called an animal?"

"Gee, Tonnan," says Rockland, *"I guess I am an animal. Are you PC or what?"*

"No, I am not PC Orwat... you know I got arrested earlier today," I say, stroking the cat. *"Of course I'm not a police constable."*

"What's its' name?"

"It's not a robot, Rockland. It's a real male man who probably wouldn't like being arrested any more than I did. He's called him Politico. The name kind of suits him, don't you think?"

Rockland shrugs, looking more baffled than amused. I look for Xinx amid the gathering of young adults and see her talking

to some handsome ass bald dude.

Xinx is laughing, smiling and looking like she wants to be where she is, though it's true that women can be masters of deception. My mildly autistic and mildly resentful mind shrugs. The handsome ass bald dude probably likes Xinx for the reason I like her... if she didn't possess these traits, Xinx wouldn't be Xinx: let's just hope the handsome ass bald dude & I don't share the same taste in women.

I caress the black cat's ears. He stops purring and turns away from me, seemingly displeased. I bid the fellow adieu and go up to Xinx, who unexpectedly kisses me on the lips.

"Hey Tonnan," she says, "how's your trip going? This is my friend Chester."

"Hi Chester. How do you do?" I asked.

I don't like making small talk with anyone, but I figure it'd be foolish to not at least go through the motions of appearing to be interested.

"I'm not bad. You?" Chester says.

"I'm okay. How about you?" I say. My head is elsewhere; in actuality my paranoid coveting self is still weighing up the odds of whether or not Chester wanted to have sex with Xinx.

"I'm bad. I hate it when someone asks me the same question twice, when the first time I gave the correct answer," Chester says.

"Then there are two correct answers, wise guy," Xinx says, and puts her hand in

mine. This came as a surprise, and I can only surmise that, as Rockland had said of Xinx before me, I was 'quite the catch'.

Chester doesn't know what to say to this. There is a brief standoff of sorts. Pleasantries and smiles are exchanged on both sides. Then Chester turns to another girl, who laughs almost as soon as he says something to her. I'd hazard the guess someone such as Chester is either usually humoured by others or there is something inherently funny about his person. I don't find him funny.

Xinx and I go to join Rockland, who is still lavishing the black cat with affection.

"Gee, Tonnar, this cat smells like Elephant Shampoo... it must be the cat you washed," Rockland says. *"All things considered, I'm pretty glad that you washed him."*

"Well, what a different world it would be if I hadn't, detective," I tell him. *"I wouldn't have been arrested, for one."*

"Were you charged with anything?" Xinx asks, poking me.

"Not that I am aware of," I say wistfully.

"Oh..." Xinx says, sounding a little disappointed.

"Maggie, the policewoman on duty, did mention the phrase 'kidnapping and assaulting' more than once, but I don't think the allegation would withstand the scrutiny of

a court of law," I elaborate in what I hope is a casually mysterious tone.

"Tonnan, I was wondering if you would..." Rockland demurely starts then stops and feels his earlobe. *"Oh, never mind, it's far too much to ask of someone who was so recently imprisoned."*

"No, Rockland, what was it you wanted?"

"I wanted to get your opinion on..." he seems reluctant to finish this thought for a couple of seconds, but finally continues, *"a poem of mine."*

"Sure, man... I mean, I'm no expert on the matter, but okay," I reply.

He hands me a piece of paper. His handwriting is in capital letters, and it is easy to read. The piece is titled *'Pornographic Visions of Purgatory'*.

I'm not going to lie to you: I was expecting it to be terribly overwritten. Poetically, though, it's really sound. You can't fault the internal rhyme. The syllable count is sometimes a little off, but I warm to it soon after a woman in it starts speaking.

From his imagistic style of writing to distinctively flamboyant style of flirting, Rockland had become somewhat of an enigma to me. There is something old fashioned about him, certainly, but he is very liberal in his use of the semi-colon and views on displays of public affection. The meaning of his poem is quite odd, too: to want to turn back time for a

mere illusion, some kind of 'je ne regrette rien' type of time-travelling existentialist, a Christopher Marlowe kind of figure to my William Shakespeare.

But there I am, reading possibly – no, probably – the greatest poem ever written, when the acid 'envelopes' me again, I feel my body shake with emotion, and I have no clue how to formulate words with my mouth suitable to the situation. Anyhow, as Rockland, Xinx and I join the stream of people going back into the halls of residence as the fire drill is over, I hand the poem back to Rockland and say, practically on autopilot, *"Yeah. I really love it. It's got a kind of lucid vibrational quality to it. Did you actually hallucinate this happening?"*

"Yeah, man... well, mostly, anyway... I had to take a bit of poetic license and rewrite the woman's speech almost entirely, but that's about the extent of it," he says.

"Figures," I say. *"Still, pretty impressive. Everything is great now that I'm on acid."*

"I didn't give you acid. That was a bit of fish-food. Literally."

"I want to read it!" cries out Xinx.

"Oh, because I'm pretty sure you said it was acid." I say, ignoring Xinx.

"Yeah, that was acid," Rockland confirms reluctantly.

"Oh, good, because that's what you said," I say.

"Yeah, that's probably what I said," he says.

"That is what you said," I say.

"I reckon so," he says, *"anyway..."*

"Let me read the poem!" Xinx says.

Rockland hands the piece of paper to her. She reads it slowly, savouring every sentence and tracing her right forefinger along the page as she does so. The way she reads is adorable!

"Wow, Rockland... I did expect some mild erotica, but I didn't expect to be so female-centric. When I met you earlier on today, I was under the impression you were a homosexual," Xinx says.

"Err... no, Xinx, that would be morally, legally and factually wrong. I'm just another bisexual who is high on acid. I appreciate the female form far more than any other,"

Rockland says.

He does look camp at this moment, though, with his bright blue scarf, pink shirt and bewildered priestly air, but looking camp is morally, legally and factually different from actually being homosexual, and I am not the fashion police.

After the fire drill finishes, Xinx and I say goodbye to Rockland & Co and go to my room.

"So here we are. This is where the magic happens," I say, sitting down on the bed. Xinx

does the same. I feel like touching her, but for some reason I don't. Xinx must magically sense that I am incapacitated by nerves, because she feels for my hand.

"I've got to tell you," she says carefully, as if peeling an unripe banana while balancing on one leg for the first time, "until the day before yesterday, I was in a relationship with a man who took everything quite literally. Not only did he take my virginity, he refused to understand why people would use words to a superficial end. For example, for him, 'I'll kill you' meant 'I'll dismember or choke or shoot you' and 'I'll love you forever' meant 'I'll think adoringly about you for eternity or I'll fuck you for the rest of my life', and so on. He wasn't stupid... no, far from it... he just believed that words carry a certain weight to them and should be respected. He wasn't ever abusive to me exactly, but towards the end of the relationship, towards present day, he suddenly became distant, and he lost all of his appeal to me. It's like he... yeah, to quote that phrase he used sometimes... became a 'fragment of his former self'."

"Well, that was then, and this is now. People change, I guess. It might interest you to know that I once had a spotty forehead. Do I have a spotty forehead now? Hell no! But I'm still me," I say.

"I'm glad to know that about you. When I first met you, I admit I had my doubts, but

now I think you're pretty cool. Anyway, where was I? Oh... the man I was seeing... let's not talk about it, okay? I just wanted to tell you. It was kind of a serious relationship, and I only got out of it two days ago."

"Okay," I say, feeling her hand. "I know how these things are. Nine months is the longest amount of time I've been inside a woman. The average stay is like seven months. The median stay... well... that's much closer to twenty minutes."

Xinx takes her hand from mine. "What on earth could compel you to say something like that? That's... just... well... disgusting. Were you trying to be funny, or something? Now, that I don't get."

"Sorry. Sometimes these things just come out."

"That's just... it doesn't bear thinking about. How could you possibly say something like that?" Xinx asks rhetorically. I can tell from the tone of her voice that she is pretty mad at me.

"Geez, I don't know. I guess I don't know you very well. I didn't mean to make you mad."

"Sometimes when you speak, I don't understand you," Xinx says, using almost the exact phrasing an ex-girlfriend had chosen to explain why she was breaking up with me.

"I guess... I'm not like other, more normal people. Anyway, sorry."

"It's okay," she says, putting my hand into hers and playing with it. "Some things just aren't supposed to be joked about, that's all."

"I guess not," I say. "What I said was the truth and the truth is no joke."

Xinx shrugs a big shrug, bites her lip and I sigh a deep sigh, then she kisses me.

"So, what were the things you wanted to do in my room?" I ask her suggestively.

"Oh, I just thought I might have a tidy up and a snoop around. I like to tidy up and snoop around. But there's not much to tidy up, firstly. And snooping around is for when you're asleep and don't know what I'm up to."

"I always sleep with one eye open," I say, and she smiles.

"What kind of music do you like?"

"Some hip-hop, some new age R&B, reggae ... that kind of thing. And you?"

"I like music that takes me some other place. Trance, David Erter, all sorts of music. Is Rockland a musician?" Xinx asks.

"I think he'd like to be labelled as one. He has a guitar and knows at least two chords."

"Yeah, he has that kind of air about him. You don't play?"

"No, but I've always wanted to. 'Always wanted to' may be an overstatement, though... I mean, I've always wanted to be on the top of a mountain, but I don't necessarily have the inclination to put in the required effort to make it so."

“I know what you mean,” she says. “I always wanted to be an astrophysicist, but I don’t think studying Classics is the best way to ensure that happens.”

I laugh: she is right. That’s one thing I’ve learned about Xinx... I don’t think that woman has ever told a lie in her life, even for comic effect; perhaps that’s why she got so irately repulsed at me before (the median amount of time I’ve spent inside a woman is probably a lot closer to two minutes).

“Do you want to have sex with me?” she asks, suddenly.

“No straight, sane, unmarried man would refuse,” I reply. Though that is quite a lot of qualifications, I am straight, sane, unmarried and a man. And probably a little bit in love with her.

Xinx feels my love and I feel hers. We share six hundred and sixty seconds of sex. She orgasms once or twice, maybe even thrice and then tells me she wants to go to sleep. She falls asleep and soon afterwards so do I.

Eight and a half hours later, I go to the kitchen to prepare coffee. I don’t need an alarm to wake up at 8 A.M. every day. I bring an Okso cup for Xinx and a Darnleo Henco ‘Grotesque Losers’ cup for myself.

“I love you,” says Xinx.

“*I love you too,*” I say. And I do. There is something very powerful about her, a kind of weight to everything she does. Of course, I fancy her but, still, there is something undeniably ephemeral about her.

We drink our coffees, talking about ancient literature, whether people are evolved from apes (she believes that we are, but she is gravely mistaken), what regions we wish to visit, and the meaning of life. Then I walk her to her class ‘*Reading Like A Writer*’, and we kiss goodbye. After that, I go to my own class ‘*Immunology*’.

Human beings – whether they be on Restralardin or Planet Earth – are immune to many things but the doctrine of death is not one of them.

THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
HAPPY TEARS IN LOVE
WITH A COLD

CHAPTER 4:
THE ACTORS ARE STUNNING
BUT THE WORLD IS A FARCE

Immunology is the study of the immune system of organisms. Prior to my classes on this subject, what I knew was limited. I knew, for example, that allergies are a result of your body reacting to a non-existent yet perceived threat. I knew, too, that cancer cells are mutant cells that have lost the ability to stop multiplying and wrap around other things, preventing them from functioning. Simple things like that.

Anyhow, the class is a group of about ten people, and I sit on the chair nearest the door. The lecturer, an orange lady with snow white hair and a penchant for analogy, introduces herself as 'Professor Vine' and asks the class if anyone knows why anteaters don't get sick.

Someone eventually raises their hand and offers, "*Because they have anty-bodies?*" A wave of giggles and guffaws drench the room.

"*Absolutely,*" Professor Vine says.
"*Antibodies are a blood protein produced to*

counteract a specific antigen. Can anyone tell me what an antigen is?"

"Proteins found on surfaces of pathogens. To put it simply, harmful bacteria?" another person suggests.

"An adjective is a descriptive word," Professor Vine says deadpan, then laughs playfully, saying, *"Ha-ha! I got you!"*

I'm not the only one that doesn't get the joke. Bemused looks are exchanged. Notes are rubbed out with erasers. The bleached-brown-short-haired woman sitting next to me shifts uncomfortably in her seat.

Professor Vine goes on to explain, *"I was pretending that my brain had been affected by one of these 'antigens', causing it to replace 'antigen' with 'adjective'. Though the chances of this happening are slim, you students are to 'fool' as Professor Vine is to 'ingenious chef of tomfoolery'."*

We laugh. Now that we get the joke, we find it pretty funny.

"Speaking of my abilities as a chef, have any of you cooked your first meal at University yet? And more to the point, what happens when you heat an antigen?"

A few hands raise. Professor Vine hurriedly chooses some keen scientist bloke, who has turned up already in a lab coat.

"Well, you'd have a hot antigen, and the heat may serve to sterilise the properties of this

bacteria which, as has been said, is predominantly protein."

"Precisely," says Professor Vine. And so, our 're-introduction' to the body's immune system continues, with the occasional good-natured joke or pun used to broach a subject. The animated teaching style of Professor Vine may serve to make things more interesting, for the sight of the eccentric orange woman moving her wrinkled hands about in an acutely relentless manner is enough to entertain most anyone for an hour.

After class ends, I chat with the bleached-brown-short-haired woman for a while. She is on her way to get an air bus to the town centre, and I am on my way back to my room. She says something about Professor Vine's cooking probably being more Buddhist than her own, and I laugh. I tell her that I would devour Professor Vine's sprouts. I find this bleached-brown-short-haired woman to be pretty attractive, but since the beginning of University, I've already slept with a beautiful women three times and received a hand job from a police officer; who am I to push my luck? When it is time for us to part ways, we share a hug. That's nice. I want to hug her again almost as soon as our second-long embrace stops.

Sometimes I wonder if there's an elaborate masterplan that each being is realising together, or if God is simply shaking Her head at our shenanigans. I don't know, you know; I just don't know. But sometimes there isn't any reason for our actions.

When I get back to the hall kitchen, Rockland is there snacking on a vinegar-quiche-fudge sandwich. I sit down opposite him and the situation's scent is oddly reminiscent of a region of hell I've never been to.

"Smells like a skunk has consumed a pint of cod-liver oil and thrown up all over themselves in a garbage compactor," I comment impulsively. *"Are you enjoying your sandwich?"*

"Reserve your judgements, Tonnar," Rockland says patiently, before realising his core values have been accosted and rapidly tapping his foot rhythmically on the floor. *"If you really want to know, it's my firmly held belief that 'good' and 'bad' are defined by societal concepts of normality. They are mere constructs of the mind... they are illusions: as real as fables, Planet Posterity or dancing dragonflies."*

"I guess. Are you enjoying it, though?" I ask, a little perplexed by his answer. I think, then, about the shit I ate in a police cell yesterday... it didn't even taste that terrible because it seemed to me at the time to be a literal necessity, and my expectations weren't

high in the first place.

“That’s beside the point,” he says. “I’m endeavouring to persevere with it, certainly. The contents of this sandwich are the most luxurious yet inexpensive ingredients I could source on my budget.”

“Sorry to hear that,” I say, feeling a little sorry for him despite the apparent paradox presented. “Are you low on money?”

“Not particularly.” Rockland looks kind of peeved at the question. “No, at the moment, I’m a man of means. I just wanted to try something new for a change. Is that okay with you?”

“Of course,” I say. People have a right to stupidity, especially if its motives are well articulated.

“How would you feel about me stripping to my bare bones to do the fucking macarena?” Rockland says suddenly, grinning challengingly at me. His smirk possesses a potentially proverbial profundity: it is grotesquely angelic; he looks, at this moment, like some kind of crudely cute cherub of a character summoned from a cartoon. There is a cheerfulness to him, too, that practically advertises he would happily take ‘no’ for an answer. Though as prone to moods as any other being, he generally is a genuinely affable guy. An aura of kaleidoscopic enlightenment emanates from his body. There is Rockland, and then there is everyone else. That’s how I

feel at least.

"If that's what you want to do, then go for it!" I tell him, thinking he is joking. I put pasta on the boil and go to the fridge to get pesto.

Rockland has finished his sandwich and shimmies over to the sink to wash his hands. As he does so, he takes off his shirt and does his trademark 'Hail Mary' ballet. *"I can't remember the macarena, and three drug laws broken is enough rules violated for one day. All I know now is that I want a mandarin, a hot chocolate, and a toothbrush,"* Rockland enthuses, his voice heavy with despairing longing.

"Some extra-strong toothpaste would come in handy, too," I offer, sanely.

"I don't brush with toothpaste," Rockland says, as if toothpaste is some queer mannerism and should be avoided like the plague.

"No wonder I'm so attracted to you," I say, jokingly. The second I say this, I regret it. It's one of my bad habits to kiddingly come onto men that I admire.

"Funny. I think I saw you in my sleep last night. You were doing a waltz-like dance, too, by yourself on the Stallion Road Mall escalator travelling up. I see people I like in dreams a lot... I go there all the time," he says. Rockland looks up at me as if expecting me to respond and when I don't, he gazes at the

fridge quizzically. *"It must mean something. I mean, your movements in the dream – waltzing by yourself on the Stallion Road Mall escalator travelling up – it must amount to something. It probably means you're going to heaven or some shit. I don't know. I'll have to ask the Fortune Teller next time I see her."*

"It probably means I am going to die happy and alone. Who's the Fortune Teller?" I ask, glad that he hasn't taken my come-on too literally.

"My imaginary friend," Rockland says. *"She smells like the orchids of the orchard where I met her on Valentine's Day."*

"Cool," I say, and I genuinely do think it kind of cool.

"You know, I like you. I like you an awful lot, Tonnán. In fact, the left side of my brain has even contemplated seducing you a couple of times." He looks solemnly into my green-brown eyes for a few seconds, as if considering some beautiful yet forbidden future of green and brown. *"I think we should just be friends, though."*

"I think so, man. I didn't know you were bisexual in the first place or that you had these feelings for me," I say. I'm not a homophobe, and I don't find the idea of two men being together disgusting but imagining myself with a man does make me kind of squeamish. To me, that's kind of like a poem that doesn't rhyme: there's nothing wrong with it at all, and

indeed it's quite common, but it isn't a poem that I'd want to write myself. For the record, I've been with three men, but that didn't really do it for me. It's like eating a banana and *not* absolutely loving it, so *not* particularly going out of my way to find another banana but still eating one from time to time. Despite myself, I am beginning to see how Rockland, with his outlandish impulses and precision to detail, could be regarded as attractive.

"I am trisexual. I will try anything sexual," Rockland says, pokerfaced, just like the character of Ali G by Sacha Baron Cohen, though he couldn't be impersonating him as we are billions of light years away. *"I'll see you later,"* he says. *"Are you and Xinx coming to the C-Century Disco Ball Event tonight at the Union?"*

"I'll be there. I'll ask Xinx in a while," I say. I remember his words about his intention to 'fuck' Xinx, who he hadn't ever met at the time of this declaration. I had let the ominous gravity of those words slip into the weightless recesses of my mind and had been feeling pretty good about the world since I talked to the bleached-brown-short-haired woman earlier. At that point, too, I wonder if Rockland is slowly attempting to bed *me*.

I eat my pesto pasta as Rockland brushes his teeth in our shared bathroom for ten minutes (it takes a long time because firstly he doesn't use toothpaste and secondly, he is

pungent as a putrid puke pizza petal). I call Xinx to ask her to the ball. She says yes, and two naps & one nervous system essay assignment down the line, I am walking with Rockland and Rebecca towards the Student Union.

"Where's Xinx?" Rockland asks, a little too keenly. Though she is not my 'girlfriend', I *have* had sex with her three times, so I feel a little irritably protective.

"We're meeting her there," I reply, factually.

"So, who's your favourite C-Century musician, Rebecca?" Rockland asks Rebecca, as if he needs something to distract his mind pronto.

"Edward Thinker. That man sure can play the ukulele," says Rebecca. She is twenty, studying Mathematics with hopes of becoming an accountant. I notice that what I thought to be Rebecca's tendency to outwardly broadcast an air of indifference (that which gives one the impression she doesn't want to be wherever she is) has been substituted for the casual yet happy eagerness of youth. She's wearing a delightfully blue cashmere cardigan.

"I prefer Mister Mystery or the Complexities of Youth, myself," says Rockland, before cheerfully adding *"I don't mind a little bit of old Ed, though!"*

“Those were the good times,” Rebecca says. *“They’ll probably play all three if we’re lucky.”*

It’s a fine autumnal night and as Rockland, Rebecca & I walk through the Student Union together, there is a palpable sense of anticipative excitement and festiveness in the air. Anyone can talk to anyone, so anyone does talk to anyone. Although I am not the kind of man who dreams while he is awake and works while he sleeps, our destinies seem yet to be designed: almost anything could happen, so anybody could wake up to anybody. We are young, alive and ready for the night.

In the dancehall, Rebecca takes Rockland by the hand and leads him onto the dancefloor in a manner that suggests I am a third wheel and she is trying to lose me. As for myself, I am not particularly fickle in my criteria for the sexual suitability of women, nor am I seeking to mirror Rebecca’s nonchalant attitude towards me, but she doesn’t strike me as being the kind of woman I would willingly enter a relationship with. My mind migrates a little further north, and I ponder love triangles.

There are many famous love triangles. To name the obvious one (which may be apparent to me only because I have watched *Birthday Sunset*, seem to have a brain that processes information alphabetically by first letter and maintain a habit of dissecting

daytime television), Regina loves Robert & Robert loves Michelle & Michelle loves Regina. Though I don't mean to suggest Michelle is a lesbian, her attraction to Regina emerges as so evident by the end of the second series it would take an evangelist baptised in holy blood not to imagine them living together in sin.

I vocalise this 'fact' to Rockland and Rebecca.

"Where did that come from? That wasn't anything close to what I thought you would say," says Rebecca disgustedly to me, and then swiftly resumes her previous position of staring Rockland dead in the eyes with dreamy determination.

"Me either," says Rockland, with a possibly pot-induced gaze of great affection that stretches from the bulge in his jeans to the sparkle in his eyes, *"I always knew I was straight and long-haired men were the devil incarnate."* His azure eyes linger on me almost accusingly, then drift back to Rebecca. My hair isn't exactly long, but it isn't exactly short, either.

I casually observe the dancefloor, but nobody really catches my attention. Perhaps I have overachieved in my exams and am going to pay for it by my new academic home's apparent lack of attractive people. With that said, I'd already met a few attractive people: Xinx, the tall woman with bleached-brown-short hair you'll soon find out the name of,

and... erm, Rockland, maybe, or Rebecca, plausibly. 'I'm A Suffragette Too' by Bald Guy is now playing. It's a fantastical song about a man who lost all of his hair because of cancer, then invented the cure for cancer but never got his hair back. It's a sort of sad narrative and, though fantastical, it is partially based on reality. Anyhow, there are about a hundred or so people here. Some are short. Some are tall. Some have green hair. Some have tobacco dreadlocks.

"Love triangles usually star three genders," chirps Rebecca in a manner that seems both ponderously condescending yet tragically ephemeral for a corny kid from private school. I reckon that she must suddenly have felt a little sorry for me but misuses the word 'gender' in such a monstrous manner that its original meaning is blurred beyond recognition.

"Regina and Robert..." says Rockland, as if testing unknown alliterative waters, harking back to my previous comments, and hypnotising Rebecca with his sibilance.

"Rockland and Rebecca..." says Rebecca, in what could only be described as a carrot.

"Rebecca and Rockland and Regina," says Rockland, using the tip of his tongue roll to the 'R's with such relish that the resulting sound simultaneously resembles a Russian raconteur re-evaluating his relationship with language and Ronald Reagan recounting his

role in Stallion Road.

The tension between them, then, is so tangible that the probable becomes the inevitable and the inevitable becomes an event. His hand firmly in hers, they ogle at each other for a while as if bewildered by the beauty of their own reflection in water, until there is nothing left on either of their lips but the gaze of the other. And so, she kisses him. And so he kisses her back. It doesn't seem like a match made in heaven and perhaps it isn't, because (on the top of the sly foot-job that Rockland received yesterday in the kitchen) it amounts only to a three-night stand yet sours the atmosphere in the kitchen for the rest of the year.

But they kiss (I guess it is romantic). And they kiss (it is certainly passionate). And then their kisses converge into one long French kiss, so I go to get a drink.

At this point, the scene erupts as everyone dances to, tries to dance to or goes mad to the opening bars of the classic 'Just Because I Wear Glasses Doesn't Mean I'm Unattractive' by The Dalliances. I presume that the DJ's song choice is in recognition of Rockland, a glasses wearer, and his first University conquest. I scout the room for anyone who looks like Xinx – as will unfortunately become my practice some twenty years in the future – and see her there in the queue for C-Century chocolate mousse. I

go to her.

“*Xinx!*” I shout over the song. She doesn’t hear me at first, so I tap her on the shoulder. She turns towards me with these guarded dark-light world-weary eyes, which still seem scrambled & stubborn (like first love or depression) when she sees me and smiles broadly. “*Let’s eat and dance!*” Xinx proclaims.

“*Let’s!*” I say, echoing her celebratory mood. I remember my dad telling me not to dance because girls don’t like boys who dance and I “*can’t dance, anyway*”, but I decide to throw caution to the wind.

We eat the (tiny [but free(!)]) portion of chocolate mousse dispensed by a woman in an authentic C-Century khaki vest. Then we sway for a while, rock back and forth rapidly to some fast old New-Age WW5-esque track and finally, again, kiss passionately. It is an unparalleled feeling to touch lips with a woman I’d normally consider to be out of my league. As Xinx and I grind against each other, my hands move down to her waist, and our tongues begin battle over key positions in our mouths in experienced yet tenderly steamy lust. The slippery chastising of her tongue and the pulse of her – dancing to her own rhythm, surrounded by young men and women trying to fit in, trying to look like they weren’t trying to fit in or not thinking but just dancing or speaking throwaway drivel – well, kissing such a beautiful women in their midst was like

fulfilling a fantasy I never knew I had.

"Tonnan!" a familiar voice to my right unexpectedly exclaims. I look for the speaker, and then I put those sonorous tones to a face again. It's the hot, tall, bleached-brown-short-haired woman from my Immunology class.

"Hi," I shout back. *"Want to go somewhere quieter to talk? This is my friend, Xinx."*

"I can't hear you," she says. *"Want to go somewhere quieter?"*

"Yes! THIS IS XINX," I say.

"Chantelle." She & Xinx shake hands.

We all head outside to the bar, where some guy is screaming about his accommodation to a member of staff. I'm just thinking about how bratty and self-satisfied some University students can be when I gather from his hollering that he has been rendered homeless for a couple of days. Anyhow, shortly he is taken away by security. I think about how the world has a (potentially wicked) way of resorting to brute force when words do not immediately rectify the problem at hand.

"I don't know if you just got to the disco and all," Chantelle says. *"But there's a house party uptown, if you've nothing better to do..."*

"That sounds pretty good. Xinx?"

"Yeah... I guess," Xinx says uncertainly, then speaks her mind. *"Actually, you go without me. I told some people I'd see them here later."*

“Are you sure?” I ask. Xinx nods her head.

“Okay, then, to uptown!” I say to Chantelle, unintoxicated yet excited.

I’m not too sure if not going with Xinx back to the disco was the first mistake in a couplet of blunders, or if my real mistake would come later.

I’m not too sure if I knew I was in love with Xinx at this point.

I’m not too sure if the following words in this story represent its climax or its cliff-hanger decrescendo, but shit is about to get sticky.

I don’t really know how to describe the mechanisations of the airbus we get into town. The machine itself is a sort of slow plane but looks more like a flying bus. The gravitational pull of Restralardin differs slightly from that of Planet Earth, but (though I am a scientist) I can’t remember enough of what I’ve learned about physics to articulate this difference in English to you now.

Chantelle and I sit at the back of the bus, which is filled with indifferent mature students who are travelling from campus to town. Almost as soon as we are seated, the airbus ascends up a hundred yards, then blasts off into town. It’s a quick & bumpy journey. Some kid is blaring ‘That Summer You Shook

My Soul' by the Red Herrings on his music-player. That song makes me kind of dizzy – it pulls me back to my school days – and I feel a little nauseous by the time we get off two short minutes later.

"The party's down the road. Do you want to get alcohol from the off-license?" Chantelle asks

"Are you hoping to get me drunk?" I say lightly, testing the waters of our friendship.

"Drinking's not compulsory," she says, sternly sexy.

I reach into my pockets. I have two unsmoked spliffs, a gift from Rockland. *"You know, some whisky wouldn't hurt,"* I say. *"You need drinks?"*

"Yeah," she says, and we go past the church, past a well-kempt garden of lilies, and buy drinks from the shop at the street-corner.

"Party, party?" The man behind the counter whimsically smiles.

"Yeah, man!" I say.

"Enjoy it. Make sure you leave with the right person, who is not always the same one you came with," he jests, looking at me, then looking at Chantelle, who blushes.

"Thanks for the advice, I guess," Chantelle says.

The party is about 50 metres down the road, past a mosque, past a porta-potty, and we arrive a minute later. Its location is broadcast by the breakneck beats tumbling from the

tenement building.

“Do I know anyone here?” I ask Chantelle tentatively. *“New places tend to make me feel a little ill at ease.”*

“I only know like three people, including the host,” she says, then notices the seasick expression on my face. *“Come on, Tonnan! It will be a laugh.”*

The first thing I do when we get there is meet a couple of people who are friends with Chantelle, then I head for the courtyard, hoping to smoke a spliff. My elements have reckoned with much stronger skunk before, and I'd been looking forward to this high-grade for a while. Sometimes I feel I need some sort of strong sedative to distract my soul, and this is one of those occasions.

There are about ten or so people out on the patio. I nod at a group of guys who look in my direction, and they all smile, shouting *‘hello!’*, *‘hey!’* or *‘welcome!’*, all with slightly different inflections. Chantelle is from a country I've never been to, so I suppose it shouldn't come as a surprise that the peoples she hangs out with are too. I light my first spliff of the night, already feeling somewhat of an outsider to what appears to be the 'cool crowd'.

I've smoked about a fourth of it when this fine-looking lady in a leather jacket walks up to me and snatches it from my hand.

“Is this weed?” she says in a well-spoken

Ioglan accent, putting the joint in her mouth. I nod, taken aback. *"I've tried weed before,"* she says, as if trying to reason with me.

"Okay," I say, nodding my head again.

She inhales. *"I'm good with weed,"* she says, *"oh... I just love weed!"*

I laugh and shrug, looking her comely form up and down. She, like Chantelle, is slender and has short bleached hair, hers dyed silver. *"It's my weed, though!"* I say, in a weedy protest.

"Sorry. Where are my manners? I'm Lika." She hands the spliff back to me, after taking another three smooth, seasoned hits.

"Hi Lika," I say. *"I'm Tonnan."*

"Are you an artist?" she inquires gravely, without warning.

"I'm studying to be a doctor."

"Oh, because you look like an artist... a writer or something, I mean. I don't know, I've always had some sketch of an artist etched in my head and you look just like it." She is painted by C-Century period powder, probably because she has been to the disco, and peers at me with a pretty proprietary posture.

"Huh," I say, somewhat surprised. *"Are you an artist yourself, Lika?"*

"I'm studying Frolid Literature, so... no. I'm the opposite of an artist – I deconstruct art, inferring 'hidden meaning' from language." She is a charming mixture of self-confident and self-depreciating.

“Isn’t that creative?” I wonder, dubious.
“A doctor can say he has saved a life...”
she says. *“Literary critics can just say they have cured themselves of curiosity.”*

(For those curious, I’d like to take this opportunity to point out that I believe [some of] the main themes of this text are

- 1. love, sex, stupidity, friendship, insanity & betrayal**
- 2. the improbability of transcendence until just before you die**
- 3. indefinite patterns repeating themselves indefinitely**

Though I have not completed a literature course in my life and have no plans to, the intentions of a work’s creator are supposed to be important, right?!)

“Well, I’m not a ‘real’ doctor yet,” I say.
“But I’m sure you can already call yourself a literary critic.”

Lika smiles somewhat begrudgingly, as if I have exposed a flaw in her argument or sussed out some illicit secret about her. *“I want to be a journalist, but I guess you were sure about your own ambitions from secondary school, huh?”*

“Probably, yeah. Not all stories have happy endings, though, as you know. Right now, my only ambition is to dance with you,” I

say, surprising both myself and her by letting my heart become my vocal cords. She scans my features for any hint of sarcasm then her smile, too, turns sincere.

“Lord, okay! Lead the way. I haven’t danced once since I got to this godforsaken University,” she says, probably referring to the persistent rumours that Hobbling isn’t the most exciting place to spend your golden years.

She takes me by the hand and follows me inside. The song playing is a D-Century synth-pop classic, with a drum machine pitter pattering at a frenzied pace, and a Tongonian vocalist scatting about his baby’s mama. I spin around & around & flail my arms, getting into the rhythm, and Lika responds by laughing & doing the Caterpillar.

Three songs later, we are both sitting on the couch. I’m looking at my phone with one hand, feeling Lika’s swanlike neck with the other – to her friend’s audible amusement – and then, next thing you know it, Lika’s hand softly moves my head in her direction and she kisses me on the lips. Not being one to refuse a kiss from an attractive woman, I kiss her back.

We make out for a long time, and a lot of people leave the party, until it’s just Lika & her friend & I.

“Well,” I say, *“I better get going, but it was nice to meet you.”* Lika’s friend titters.

“Sure, I’ll see you around probably,” Lika

says.

“Yep,” I say, “*Hobbling can be a small place sometimes.*”

I kiss her on the lips once more. We part. She moves like an aphrodisiac sprung from the sea-salt where she was conceived, talks like a purple lollipop would talk if a purple lollipop could talk, and tastes sweet as vanilla fudge with extra sugar.

I get on the airbus, having paid my respects to the snake-skin-attired host (Chantelle had already left). It is a reasonably quiet commute at this hour. The moon, gaudy & yellow & full, casts its cheese-eye over town. Have you ever seen something so beautiful & transient yet constant you wonder if your worldly eyes were not meant for it?

I open the door and go upstairs to the kitchen, where my hallmate Tim and his boyfriend are discussing Tim’s ‘friendship’ with a woman. I’d recently read a novel about someone who believed he was a homosexual but had developed some feelings for a woman. Such events do occur in reality and I’ve been dying to tell *someone* about that book, but given my companions’ instable status as a happy homosexual couple, I figure now is not the time.

As the kettle reaches a boil, Rockland unexpectedly appears from the hallway, all charismatic & bleary-eyed. He is closely

followed by Xinx.

“Salutations, Doctor-In-Training Tonnan,” Rockland croons sleepily. *“I might be wrong, but according to the lipstick on your mouth, you’ve had a wonderful night.”*

“Hi Rockland and Xinx,” I say. *“Xinx, what are you doing here? Is there lipstick on my mouth?”*

“Yes, and it’s not mine,” she says, unenthusiastically. *“Oh, well, Rockland, we had a good time, too: didn’t we?”*

“Erm, yeah.” Rockland scratches the back of his head.

“What did you two get up to?” I ask sceptically.

“We talked for a while. Rockland passed on some fascinating philosophical musings to me, we kissed once, and we smoked a lot of herb,” Xinx says, nodding continually like a bobblehead.

“I thought you were with Rebecca, Rockland,” I say. *“Where is she?”*

“It’s 2 AM., man. She’s asleep,” Rockland says.

I have some other questions I want to ask, but I figure I should take Xinx’s words at face value, since she is honest to a fault.

“I’m going now,” Xinx says. *“Night Rockland. Thanks again.”*

“Night Xinx,” he says. *“I’ll lend you that book we were talking about when I’ve finished it.”*

“Goodnight, Xinx,” I say, tenderly.

“When am I going to see you next?”

“If you’re going to be getting with other people... well, I’m not sure I want to see you at all, but...” she sighs, “Rockland and I also kissed, just as I told you about! I thought I was mad at me, but now I don’t have to be mad at either of us!” She laughs as if she has heard something absolutely hilarious. I realise she is truly stoned.

“With the Rockland-Xinx-kiss,” she adds mulishly, “the first couple of seconds made me think that he’s pretty bad kisser, but then I grew to enjoy taste of vinegar.” She sticks her tongue out at Rockland. “

And then?” asks Rockland.

“Then I realised he doesn’t care, so why should I?!” Xinx declares happily. I realise she has been drinking, in addition to smoking weed. “Anyhow, I bid you good fellows a very good night!”

She departs in moggy demagogic glory.

It’s always been my opinion that love is often found in the ephemerality of a beautiful moment. I guess I’m a little less vexed about the intimacy of Xinx & Rockland than I would have been had Rockland not already expressed his intentions to sleep with her.

A couple of days later, in the Science Block toilets, I go to take a dump and I see Rockland's self-flagellating graffiti etched shambolically across the bathroom wall. It reads '*R.I.P. + X_Y = forever*', in Rockland's recognisably readable handwriting. Next to it is an admittedly pretty impressionistic image of Xinx. I don't know, you know; sometimes I just don't know. As you can imagine, though, I'm not all that happy about it. Xinx has a middle name (Befaim) and Rockland doesn't know what it is, but this isn't what is bugging me. No, it's how Rockland seems so blasé about the concept of having the same biblical knowledge of a woman I do, as if it were a restoration of the natural order of things. The actors are stunning, but the world is a farce.

Rockland avoids me that week, but when I finally see him in the kitchen, he nods at me and states factually, "*I am well, thank you for asking, Tonnan.*"

"*But I didn't ask,*" I say, in an unsympathetic – nay, hostile – tone.

"*Oh, okay,*" he says. And then he wanders deliriously back to his room.

About four weeks after the start of University, I'm awoken in the middle of the night by a text from Xinx. It reads "*I know I'm a jerk, Tonnan... but I still have feelings for*

you that run deep. I just had a beautiful dream about you. I feel so depraved”. I read the message and felt pretty sorry for her. Being deprived of me, of all people, must mean that things have taken a turn for the worse. But I don't respond to the text.

Anyway, it so happens that in the week after the text was sent and received, Xinx and I run into each other by the Humanities block, and she invites me to go on holiday with her in the coming half-term. I don't refuse. We go to Way-West.

There, Xinx ties me to the clandestine palace of ruins by the beach (she is a dominatrix, after all) and fellates me for an hour. I'm not going to pretend that she had sex with Rockland three or more times purely to spite me (and I understand temporarily why he might have appealed to her temporarily), but some kind of warped 'revenge' agenda may feature in her plot, as I realise there is much more to her than immediately meets the eye or ear after spending a content three full days with her. Once, we have sex for such an aeon that during the proceedings I contract another cold, and weep with happiness as I can feel a climax coming on to me... and that's the genesis of this story's title: happy tears in love with a cold.

As for Rockland, though he is a hedonistic heathen, I'm not sure he is ever

wrong about anything. He is sent to an insane asylum, for one of his enemies (apparently, he had stolen someone's yoghurt and knocked over a litre of milk in the process) had secretly recorded him speaking about his mosquito farm.

Rockland's set-up consisted of a small heater in a cheap glass tank, placed opposite his bed in the fifth week of study. He added rotting fruit, red meat and water into the tank, and soon after this, the first mosquitos were welcomed to their new home. He hoped that mosquitos would breed in his farm, in such a way that they "*ethically complete the trials of living and then righteously ascend to heaven*". By the time of his arrest and detention, Rockland had documented the presence of over three hundred mosquitos in the farm.

Anyhow, a police car arrives in December and takes him to a hospital that claims to doctor the abnormal mind until it conforms to ordinary standards. Rockland had engaged in intercourse with two people that I'd had sex with by then, so as well as being an apparent purveyor of the truth in a world of lies, he had done what I would have done, which forms a large component of the reason for my label of him as a 'hedonistic heathen'. Not only is he a 'hedonistic heathen', he is also legally insane. With the ownership of Rockland's mosquito farm company now transferred to the University, Rockland's last

ever words to me on campus are spoken in an exhilarated frenzy of excitement.

"In order to be good at singing or smoking, always soul your mouth: use it as the centre piece..." Rockland says, laughing sardonically in a way that reminded me of a squirrel from an anime cartoon I used to be a fan of. *"It's like an internal harmonica or cacophonical gift to the audience, the sweetest candy that ever existed."*

And that's it for him: he stays there for a good year and a half, being released a little before I die for the first time. His room at University remains vacant for the rest of year. I go to see him twice in the insane asylum: the first time I see him, he refuses to speak Frolid to me, so we communicate using body language and in broken Hibbish; the second time, he tells me that he feels very sorry for me, because he has a feeling something terrible is going to happen to me. And it does.

I can't say where I would be were it not to happen as it does, but a cataclysmic apocalyptic force opposing my material, science-based existence would soon accelerate like a falling moon onto the metal metropolises of my otherwise unremarkable world and hundreds of lives would be hurled headlong into the heart of a localised Armageddon.

**THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
CATASTROPHE**

**CHAPTER 1:
TOENAIL HOSPITAL, TOFFEE COFFEE
& K**

My sordid adult account of the events leading up to the mathematical orchestration of this universe's birth should balance the glamorisation of adolescence's nowness with a hint of a wistful yearning to be back there. Since English is my third & only language and I have already exposed part of the proposed formula for the heart of this story, you can read it for free. It took me three earthly years to write and a hundred to live. I still haven't gotten over a lot of what happens in it. Some stuff you don't get over until you realise that it has gotten over you. But other stuff you never get over at all. You just can't banish the demons from your memory or mentally bandage the scars.

My story isn't particularly long. It isn't particularly short. It is as simple as it is complicated. After reviewing the 32nd version of this text, it's apparent to me that the trilogy's arresting simplicity detains untruth and strums sequentially on the soundless strings of the oversoul that every being can instinctively feel. Though you may deem such a notion to be the aspirant devising of a lunatic, this book is my

magnum opus, my Mona Lisa, my rainbow-flavoured milkshake, my supreme inkgasm.

Extremely few people read my writing, so consider yourself lucky to be a member of this tiny obscure minority. While there's no message to this statement, I hope to emphasise the fact that every being is fundamentally minute relative to the totality of existence. My own insignificance, as one living humanoid proportional to my former planet's ample population, was an idea that often struck me while I grew up in Spoonfell, New Restralardin. But still, the capital of the world was wherever my latest crush happened to be and the only thing worth having was the ability to materialise the dream that the capital of the world would one day be sitting down on my knees.

There were purportedly twelve thousand and twenty-two species of organisms living in Spoonfell alone, and the borough's total populace was estimated to be around a million. A type of arachnid antelopes roamed the woods, scavenging for nuts and occasionally reaching the town, where these spider-deer creatures scaled buildings and the fire brigade would be summoned to help them down. Small seal-like beings devoured plankton in the canal but were in turn swallowed whole by carnivorous plants which metamorphized into mutant caterpillar upon sensing the movement of their prey. The average humanoid in New

Restralardin looks similar to Earth's average woman but possesses a gaudier variety of skin & hair colours. The technology there is more advanced in some respects yet comparatively archaic in others. New Restralardin is probably a pretty small planet, but its dimensions can't be contrasted to those of Earth because it is in another universe.

We are now in the clockless territory of Toenail Hospital, a realm where time's tempo goes as slow as an infant giant's toe would grow, though in actuality every moment evacuates the past as fast as a vast tribe of flees would multiply, receding beyond the linear dominions of perception and into the villas of memory and imagination. My description of the passage of time in this dimension is deliberately vague, for an explanation of the nature of time itself fails to grace the lips of even the most enlightened of astronomers, and I am at this point a paltry foot-doctor-in-training on work placement. Nonetheless, as you walk through the rotating door at the clinic's entrance, the feeling that you have forgotten something vital to your interest swiftly envelops your being.

The small hospital is coated in hostile scarlet paint that connotes it is under communist control. Mutating motors glide by the complex like big buoyant butterflies pulled

by harlequin hurricanes. These vehicles are mostly manned by the middle classes of our civilisation, who can sometimes be found brewing whisky or taming plants in luscious miniature-garden-skyscrapers.

Cyprus trees, generously scattered in cataclysmic constellations, represent a governmental nod towards the primeval years in which nature ruled the streets. Here also reside realistic animated murals and mosaics in memoriam of those murdered in World War Fourteen. But they that don't walk or fly here tend to forget about this section of the citadel: it is impossible to keep thinking about the same thing continuously for a great length of time, and one can live functionally without toenails.

I don't work late on Thursdays, but it is raining, so I walk home umbrellaed. The silhouetting skies stain the world with an antique oppression, antagonizing all that have the misfortune of being on the street without brollies. They to whom the pain's wrath is not wasted upon wear newspapers over their heads and skip down the street, open-mouthed, hoping to be dry and asleep before it is too late.

I figure I'll get a coffee on the way home. Outside the all-night café sit a fox-coloured miniature Alsatian and its keeper, the former of whom upon meeting my eye positively howls a minor blues scale at me, the melody climaxing into a harmonious wail

reminiscent of a saxophone solo that I heard a long time ago but that I can't place, the rhythm so tightly wrong that any error in the sequence's measure appears to be rectified by time itself. By way of saying sorry to me the miniature Alsatian keeper melodramatically states that the miniature Alsatian suffers from short man syndrome and that I am a tall man (which is quite true). I don't laugh, though, because I don't find her peculiar jest of an apology to be funny, but I'm nowhere near nihilistic enough to not smile at her in any case.

In the all-night-café, a nondescript barrister with weary time-stained eyes takes my order of toffee ice coffee and banoffee pie. I pay, saluting the man energetically to convey my gratitude. I occupy a window seat. An ugly man and a beautiful woman sit in an adjacent booth and talk shop.

"I'm no eavesdropper, but sometimes I find myself in situations where I can't cover my ears out of politeness; I guess you could say I'm the kind of woman that would hiccup to disguise a burp... but then again, I do shower regularly," says the beautiful woman with mocking venom.

"I don't know what I've been doing with my life. I should be spending more time trying to look beautiful. That's where I've been going wrong," the ugly man sighs enviously.

“Washing more frequently would be a start,” the beautiful woman replies with a patronisingly sage sympathy. I agree with the beautiful woman’s assessment of the situation, as the stench of sweat emanating from the ugly man is putrid beyond measure, even from metres away.

“You know that I have aquaphobia...” the ugly man says, fidgeting with his legs uselessly.

“And to think we are out on a day such as this. My, oh my, oh my, oh my... how long has it been?” the beautiful woman repeats probingly yet teasingly monosyllabically, as if she were playing the role of a teacher who has just caught a student smoking outside his high school in a barely legal porn movie.

“Two months!” he declaims despairingly, shaking his head in shame. Figures, I think to myself. I stop listening and collect my thoughts. They rest on Xinx, my girlfriend. I wonder if I will ever love anyone or anything as much as I love Xinx, then I wonder whether she remembered to buy marmalade from the shop to make marmalade pancakes, then I shake my head with the same shame the ugly man who smells demonstrated seconds ago.

My order arrives. I tuck into the banoffee pie, an ecstatically dynamic yet flavoursome fusion of banana and toffee in tart form – just what the foot-doctor-in-training ordered. The dessert’s very aura counters the

smell of the ugly man. I'd even go so far as to say the disagreeable sight and the vomitable odour of the ugly man are effectively cancelled out by the majesty of banoffee pie.

Anyhow, the combination of banoffee pie and toffee iced coffee play tricks with my palate and endorphins dance as if in a banana-toffee-coffee ballet performed in my mouth for one night only. I focus on the flavour (I eat and drink quickly so as to maximise the taste per second) and ignore the surroundings for the next few minutes until I leave the coffee shop. The rain has eased up a bit; maybe I won't die in a tropical storm after all. I wander through the cobbled centre of Treetop Towntain, which is deserted but for a few sombre homeless souls, as is to be expected on such a ferociously aqueous occasion, and I arrive in the cemetery.

We are now in the cemetery. Some gravestones are marked; others are anonymous. Some are adorned by flowers; others are bare. In the centre of the cemetery sits a starkly slim sphinx, who guards the graves in graceful yet serious servitude. Some of the regions of this world, including ours, celebrate the cat as a physical representation of Godliness. I still sometimes fondly recall the playful pussy that my parents kept when I was a child; I too grew to respect and admire the acutely feminine traits of our feline friend, who was a little younger than me. It was an

extremely novel experience watching that cat being born, and I can nearly recall the event with photographic clarity: her mother panted ferociously and in between each wheeze there was a purr of affection, as if this were the birth of a saviour set to proffer a solution to the problems of the worlds. It was an ominous sound she made, thinking about it. Eventually popped out a bloody, beautiful kitten. The newborn, like her mother before her, would perish in peace a decade and a half later without altering our world in any particularly meaningful way. But at least a few people remember her. My mind briefly lingers, too, on the cat I washed at University, and the hours I spent inside jail because of him. Subconsciously my pace quickens.

It goes without saying that the cemetery is not where the dead dwell, for the dead by definition do not dwell anywhere. Sometimes I feel that the inevitability of death is the only thing that unites all living creatures. If an afterlife does exist, however, I am qualified to offer a healthy doubt that the experience is endless. [The practicalities of being dead are unimaginable to most minds. The closest some of us get to death is the state of unconsciousness. When we wake from sleep, sometimes we feel as if no time has passed since the start of our slumber. I don't suppose that's what death is like, though, because for the deceased an eternity passes instantly yet

there is no repossession of perception at the end of it.]

A hooded man crosses himself and says a few words to his dead relative. Twenty years later, his own body will be buried a few rows away, but this thought does not enter his mind. He is alive. His relative is dead. That's all there is to it. For the time being.

We are now in the underground skate park, where multi-lingual graffiti-stricken walls advocate cold turkey, lucidly decry the state and advertise the numbers of 'service agencies' (drug dealers or prostitutes). A particularly talented artist has drawn a lion gnawing at a kratom carrot triumphantly.

There is music playing. It is not popular music. It is not unpopular music. It is merely music. With that said, though, there is something unambiguously hipster about the cadence of this specific music: instead of the normal tat-tat-tat, it is noticeably tat-tu-tu-tat-tu-tu, but maybe I am just oversimplifying something complicated. Anyway, I suppose the very basis of music is rhythm and were you to associate this with any genre of music you would call this old-school new-age reggae.

I stand to watch the skaters for a while, as the rain has stopped, and it will be a while before Xinx is home. This is where I meet Kleopatra, the woman that Rockland

prophetically envisioned I would have sex for an unrelenting eternity with.

Kleopatra is a little shorter than me, has long purple hair and hazel eyes. She appears next to me. She is dressed in a dense denim sapphire shirt, tight against her gigantic tits, which dwarf mine to the eleventh power (though I appear to have small breasts they are, in actuality, muscles).

"I don't mean to be overly straightforward, but I feel kind of deprived of..." Kleopatra ventures slowly, her voice trailing off, gazing into the distance, though she clearly addresses me.

"Nicotine?" I offer half-heartedly. I'm not in the mood for conversation, no matter how attractive or funny the speaker.

"Yeah. Nicotine..." she smiles, turning towards me.

"Sorry, I don't smoke much," I tell her.

"Do you flirt much?" she asks.

We look into each other's eyes for a second. There is a tiny resonance of blue in hers amid the hazel.

"No. I have a girlfriend," I reply.

"Oh, sorry," she says, and the way she says it makes it sound as if she *is* sorry for me.

"Forget about it," I say hastily, smiling at her.

"Phone number?" Kleopatra asks.

“Uh... why should I give my phone number to you?” I wonder to her, genuinely not knowing the answer to my question.

“You might love me,” she states solemnly.

My smile becomes vacant. I feel stupid. Sometimes I believe I belong to whoever’s talking to me.

“Am, Gm7, F7, D” I say, submitting to her serious mood.

Kleopatra’s brain registers the number, and she kisses me on the cheek. She skips off in her skin-coloured skirt. I feel dire yet vaguely turned on. I wince a little or I wince a lot.

Above ground it starts to drizzle again. A skater narrowly avoids serious injury as he fails to defy gravity in a 1040-degree flip, instead landing on his back. He shouts out in shock or pain, and there is nothing that a foot-doctor-in-training can do to help him.

**THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
CATASTROPHE**

**CHAPTER 2:
THE REPRECUSIONS OF HALLOUMI**

In the centre of Treetop Towntain, I walk and talk languidly with Xinx, a woman who is quite like me at this moment (excited and hormonal), for she is tipsy and her soul shares the same sole aim of attaining halloumi, which is atrociously low-priced yet euphoric and heavenly in this part of town. It can be bought from a wooden shrine of a store that sells popcorn, pesto pasta, banana milkshakes and coconut juice.

Treetop Towntain is elevated above Moonlight City, eastward of the accommodation we rent for our final semester at Hobbling University. Its name derives from the fact that the municipality is on the mountain but is close enough to the forest to be viewable and level with the top of the trees.

Xinx and I purchase fried halloumi from the vendor, he nods and we half-half-heartedly salute him. I consume a little, biting into its frivolity, surprised by its crunch. I decide halloumi tastes more like bacon than cheese and as I convey this revelation to Xinx, she summons a cab by raising and lowering her gloved hand in a way that would look nebulously imprudent were it not to contain

such sensuous grace that it is instead
ludicrously appealing.

We hold hands and get onto the cab, a
robust tractor-like Chevrolet, with a strangely
Aryan, washed-out driver. He wears a beret and
I'd say that his hair has always been a grey
silver. The angelic bouquet of broken
doorknobs that I bought for Xinx falls off her
head of parrot blue hair as he accelerates along
the highway. She looks at me light-heartedly
then turns to the driver with incandescent
ferocity.

"My fucking hat!" Xinx cries out, aghast
at the calamity of fate.

*"Sorry, driver, could we go back to get
her fucking hat?"* I ask, mirroring her mood.

*"That's totally possible, hot mamma and
sir,"* replies the driver.

The Chevrolet speeds on for a second
then does an abrupt 180-degree turn, heading
straight for Xinx's broken doorknob bouquet,
which I notice looks even more damaged after
we run it over. But Xinx picks up the bouquet
of broken doorknobs, which are in fact so
broken several of them appear to have nearly
repaired themselves. Doorknobs are the latest
sex symbol here, and this hat has a white sign
on it, saying *'NOT FOR SALE'*.

The Chevrolet heads to our apartment,
and in a short five minutes the Treetop
Towntain scenery ends abruptly and

dramatically, like my physical connection to Xinx will.

(Overall, it was happy but not without sorrow. Maybe that's the whole point of going anywhere or falling in love with anybody.)

My hands are no longer mine but hers. They're played like they're a highly dyslexic organ, the devil's own, and I can't stand or believe my own melancholy, which is a job in and of itself sometimes. If you find this funny, it is because you take joy in the sadness of others – schadenfreude – or you are misconstruing my words.

"I don't like to think about how it is made," Xinx says sovereignly and drunkenly, "but reason is suspended for it is impossible to be happy all the time, for you would have nothing else to contrast to misery. Nothing, though? I must take that back. It doesn't work in this context... Nothing... Uh... Nothing is for after... That would be it... Nothing lives here."

[Some beings are so beautiful but my soul, now closed, is burdened... I look outwards yet still I mix faces up for most of my brain is lost to quadratic theorems or names and for many seconds, she only exists as she is, a drunk woman talking to a tipsy man, without any other definitions or labels attached].

She rambles about the making of halloumi or the act of making love, then she lackadaisically leans her head on my shoulder. I can't understand much of what she says, but I

don't ignore her playing with my hand, egged on by her voice, which becomes posher yet more incomprehensible when she is not self-aware and has been drinking.

"... Are you? But... oh... no... yes..."

Oh, we can if you want. But anyway, I can't accept the idea that we exist purely as spirits, like objects, unable to change the course of our temporary bodies... Though Sadist Soothsayer made some wild prophecies about our life expectancy, we should be dead pretty soon," Xinx says.

Only a fraction of this night has been funny, so I gasp to stifle a giggle then realize I do not have to contain it, so I laugh out loud. Xinx looks out of the window expectantly yet questioningly.

"There will be an end to sleep and life, but sleep is a dreamy death and death is dreamless sleep," the taxi driver stretches and yawns. *"We have no concept of eternity until we forget, and we will never know eternity itself... for God could not blame us."*

I smile in agreement but then my body twitches, a sign that the better part of me doesn't fully agree with his statement. No, life is not for the meek, where the weeks drift slowly ahead like the corpses of all the chickens we ate, once trapped and now dead. I am nearly vegan now, but I do like halloumi & pine oil. You may believe that I should be imprisoned with Rockland in the insane

asylum for this, but I feel I can remember lifetimes before the one I am narrating now, sexless & hopelessly hormoneless: endless days spent meditating thoughtlessly in a cage (I believed I was a dog, and the workers at the farm referred to me as a dog, but I led the life of a pig). Anyhow, it kind of makes you wonder. Three minutes later, the driver's last six words echo in my head and I realize I have grown up... tortured in parallel worlds, I am now a human monster who has facilitated such anguish by accident and somehow haven't been second to it.

"That'll be thirteen hypons..." says the driver, turning on the screen in his waggon and propping his feet up on the transport. *"The Leader will be on right about NOW."*

I pay, leaving one hypon as a tip, and go inside while choreographing the inebriated Xinx. I'm almost grossed out by the feel of her faux fur, but it's ugly enough to turn me on slightly, even more so because I know she bought it herself.

Inside our sphinx-shaped apartment, the wide-screen television responds to our entrance, turning itself on.

"... I don't believe the transportation system is as operational," the Broadcaster says, *"as your government has publicised. 'Gus got a bus and didn't cuss' isn't necessarily a better slogan than 'Don't quit if it's shit'. I've waited*

twelve minutes for a bus that was supposed to take ten minutes. It's outrageous and that's not even the most extreme of examples."

"I'm not Sorry for wasting two minutes of your life," the Leader says, "and I know you're not Sorry, either. You're the goddamn Broadcaster. Where is this so-called 'Sorry' individual everyone keeps talking about but refuses to be? Some things simply cannot be avoided, just as sexual torment will most likely occur after both partners have consented to intercourse."

"What are you trying to say? It's not inevitable or true that the genders are relatives of each other," the Broadcaster says, "nor that those who are sane are same in the entirety of their being. "

"You're right on..." the Leader says, "the chair. But surely insanity or sanity is definable."

"I'd like to think so – but you, sir, seek to defy and deify and decry such categorisations," says the Broadcaster.

A plethora of people lose their wits and go ape shit: it seems their beloved Leader is being made fun of by the Broadcaster! Even the Cameraman grunts uncomfortably as he pans in on the Broadcaster, who victoriously sweeps his hair to one side, the perfect image of his Father.

"Either you or I are insane, and I think I know which," the Leader nods and then spits guiltlessly on the floor. Tens of people stand

up and clap, then the whole audience starts to clap. There is a cinematic pastiche of the studio-viewers and the scene is cut, moving onto cringe worthy news and monotonous adverts.

Outside the television and the studio and inside our house, Xinx puts her hand on my sex and massages it in a playful way that says she knows I am bored, and she is bored too.

My pen is growing erect. I'm not going to describe Xinx again, for this is not memory to me, but to say she is beautiful is an understatement. And I love the faux-fur & gloves she is currently wearing, particularly, for it accentuates her womanly traits in an almost masculine way. She is a half-black, half-azure, and will soon be a fully-trained archivist.

She presses her hand down harder & harder, and I can't control myself anymore, so I kiss her & she kisses me back & she grabs my hair, slaps my face and titillates me with her tongue on my neck until I say "off". Xinx pulls my jeans down (the television responds too [the heat-up-eat-in-meals being advertised fading to a blank yellow]), applies a banoffee condom, then she mounts my cock and bounces up & down, my hands on her love handles which are so essentially antique and fatty.

"Ugh," I say.

"Shut up," she says, in that superior voice, biting my tongue.

"Ugh," I say.

"Shut up," she says, in a more ordinary voice, which though I believe to be more self-conscious is somehow realer.

I lick her earlobe and caress her tits.

For some reason, my favourite physical thing about women is their breasts & earlobes. I love to get sucked, but only if there are breasts & earlobes. Otherwise, women would look just be men with vaginas and slightly different brains. This is what I think as she bounces up & down. Or maybe it's because I haven't seen a man's face for a few minutes. I am especially stupid while having sex.

"Get off a sec. I want some halloumi," I say.

I lift her off. I put halloumi on her vagina. I eat it off. It really turns me on, the taste of her and the halloumi together. She can be a horrible person, but her teeth and vagina are always clean. I secretly suspect she is a lesbian, but we haven't ever talked about it.

I lick her out for a few minutes and as always her come is as tasty as noodles & as healthy as sprouts (eh? heh, reminds me of Henry's Grandma's tofu).

She orgasms and farts at the same time. I keep licking her out until her vagina barely tastes of sprouts or Henry's Grandma's tofu.

"Suck me off," I instruct her, softly. Her skin-colour, which you as an earthen probably haven't encountered, is also far from common in this part of the world.

She puts my right ball in her mouth, places her right gloved hand on my left ball and pinches my bottom with her other hand. Not much happens for about thirty seconds. I feel her faux-fur jacket, which never fails to turn me on.

"Suck me please," I ask her, now.

"Yes," she says.

And she does, first licking circularly around the top of my cock, then deepthroating as if her mouth were karma itself. It feels like this is the reason I am alive. I come a little. I don't let her make me orgasm. I don't want to. A small part of the joy of making love is the relief when it's all over.

"Orgasm," she breathes.

She sucks the other ball now.

"Take your clothes off," I tell her.

"No," she says but she does in a few seconds, revealing her small plump tits (which at this point I can't help but compare to Kleopatra's, for a reason unbeknownst to me) and kisses me, transferring a halloumi and banoffee condom flavour to my mouth.

She sucks my cock properly, teasing me then going all the way down and fiddling with my balls until I climax. It's a strange thing, and probably not one that I should be revealing to you, but sometimes when she gives me head it feels as if my whole being could be swallowed by her. Secretly, I feel like my brain is being

murdered. I want to go to heaven and die the second I get there.

Suddenly I can't stand my own sanity, an amalgamation of sexual satisfaction and the poetry of contentment. I always believed that time is a fluid entity, but now everything and nothing seems to converge and happen at once, as if the gravity of current circumstance tugs the unreachable fire of the past into the precipice of the future. Yes – that's it, I think again – I want to go to heaven and die the second I get there.

Then – oh! wow! – I orgasm. It's a wonderful orgasm. I can't remember being born, but I expect a 'little death' feels worse than that, but 'a big death' feels better than 'a little death'. Hell yeah! I am home, briefly, barely speaking sense in any language, somewhere in between the dogma of the day and the anaesthetic of sleep.

"Though I enjoy the world, sometimes I can't wait to go to sleep or die forever," I say.
"Do you think that makes me morbid?"

"I don't enjoy this life all that much either," Xinx says, *"but that doesn't mean soon I want to die forever."*

"Soon I will die forever," I insist.

"You will die soon in the grand scheme of things... you just don't have to keep talking about it," she says.

"Okay. Good night, Xinx," I say.

"Good night, Tonnann," says Xinx.

It's silent for a minute, then she laughs loudly.

"First I realised all my friends are celebrities and then I realised I don't know any celebrities. I nearly wept for two days straight!" She hoots.

"I'm your friend," I tell her, *"but soon I will die forever."*

She pretends to cry at the thought of it, then closes her eyes & nods, as if she were willing herself to sleep.

"So... when are you going to die?" she asks, tricking me with her tongue.

"I don't know," I say.

We stop talking.

"Good night, Tonnan," Xinx says.

"Good night, Xinx," I reply.

I wake up somewhere random and undefined, so I am sure that I am in a dream. I'm in a concrete room, without a discernible entrance or an exit, a cube of walls. Kleopatra sits, over there, across the room, glaring at me expectantly like she did at the underground skate park. She looks the same as she did then, only she's naked and pouting slightly. I reciprocate her look properly this time by challengingly narrowing my eyes. Each of her tits is as big as her head, like those of a woman I used to fancy in high school a few years ago.

There's a purple tattoo on the right one that says, *'don't fake me or I'll make you'*. Kleopatra sees me eying it. She blushes. Her toenails are painted pink. There is a faint smell of manure & pot in the air.

"You are my angel," Kleopatra says.

"Am I?" I say, feeling kind of lily-livered.

"Of course," she says as if it's a well-known fact. *"Who else would come to visit me, here, where the procedures of physics are lackadaisical and lethargic like a honeymoon of lollipops?"*

I didn't choose to be here, I think, but I must have said it aloud too, for she nods and then shakes her head like she has made up about something.

"What's your name?" I ask.

"K," Kleopatra says.

"What?" I say, feigning bewilderment.

"I what you to," she misspells sensually.

"Where are my clothes?" I ask without any sense of urgency.

"Embarrassed?" K tuts, and suddenly I feel like replaying the first and only chapter of that seedy new age 'Bible' book.

"Eh? Be seedy, F" I smile, deciding to subtly flirt with her.

"No love for E?", K asks.

She giggles in a very revealing way. Somehow, I feel like I know her now. I love her laugh. I want it to continue for longer than it does.

"I like your tattoo," I tell her. *"It reminds me of Oestrogen."*

"What does it say? My boobs are too chubby for me to see the message. It's a little bit embarrassing. And we're in a dream. Oh, gosh!" K says. She laughs.

"Don't take me or I'll fake you", I say, suddenly tipsy.

"How kinky," K says with, if it's not my imagination running away with me, a certain variety of vegetarian bloodlust.

"Come closer. We're too far apart for this to be a good dream!" I exclaim, lightheaded now.

She cackles this time and shakes her head, her wavy hair waving all wavy at me.

"I'll come closer then," I say.

She puts the middle finger of her left hand in her mouth as I move towards her.

"I want to teach you a lesson about the Alphanumerical Highway of Etiquette," she professes exotically.

I sit down about a foot away from her.

"Of course," I say, as if this is standard dream procedure.

"You can dance by yourself forever, but you can never know a person so well you know what they're thinking."

"Oh?" I say, kind of disappointed.

"No. You're as naïve as pot noodles!"

"So?" I say.

K mirrorishly mocks me, her skin changing into that shade of silver that I have seen in movies of far-off worlds: “So... So?” K laughs. She moves her foot closer to me, then teases me with her toes, moving her left foot up and down my groin, groaning in what seems like ridicule as she fingers her pussy but as a matter of a fact is ecstasy.

“Woah!” I say, feeling like I am flying.

“Uh. Uh. Uh,” she moans.

I smell. It smells like home. Her right foot manoeuvres up and down my cock. Occasionally she uses the left foot to clench. It’s almost embarrassing how fast I come to that foot. I even get to smell her toes. They smell like parsley. I’m getting assaulted by parsley. I badly, badly, want to orgasm. And I do. It takes three minutes.

“Relax,” Kleopatra says.

She giggles. With some athletic certainty & sexual gravity, and against what I thought scientifically possible, she puts her cum-covered foot in her mouth and swallows the discharge fluid.

We chat for a while about the latest happenings on a moon a million miles away. I don’t really look in her eyes. I just gaze directly at her tits. I realise that eyes must be designed to look at tits. They are, after all, both the same distance away from each other.

“Recovery position?” K furtively inquires.

I wake up. I sigh. I wonder if part of me is still there with K. I ponder the whole affair for a second. I check my watch. It's 4:20 am.

I go to the kitchen, where I raid the fridge for cigarettes (we keep them underneath the yogurt). I smoke one on the balcony. Part of me wants to jump off into the nether the instant I get there, but I refrain from following my instinct, as every man should do. If G.A. was correct when he said 'first-thought-best-thought' and were people to follow his teachings as if they were prophetic gospel truth, we would live in a shallow, twisted world. I feel like I don't quite belong here for some reason, even though this is where I live.

I go back inside the apartment & within seconds I am asleep on the couch.

I can barely believe my eyes, but there, in front of me, appears K! I look around. We are in a windy suburb on the roof of a flat in Frugton, perhaps. Her purple hair blows with the wind. I have the impression she hasn't showered in a week or so, but she seems filthily free. She is wet, wearing ripped jeans & a white t-shirt, and I shoot an evanescent glance at the silver bra beneath it. She is smiling, as if gloating about seeing me three times in a day.

"I want to tit-fuck you to Christian martyrdom," she says unsubtly, challenging my internal monologue.

“D’accord,” I say, shrugging with all my might.

I notice I am not quite lucid, though I see the dream in first person.

“You want to speak in Franklin?” she asks.

“No. I wrote a poem in Franklin, though...” I reply.

“For me?”

“No. But it might as well be.”

“Recite it,” she says.

“Je me souviens une femme qui a charment mon amour ou les animaux chantent de la gens de la mass toujours. Mon section du citadelle est couvertes de le bisou qui m'a manque et musiques ambiant qui ne parle pas de quoi j'adore. Et moi, le séquence secret de l'astronomie a un réflexion pour mangent: c'est ne infinie pas et toi j'abhorre. Je cours en cercles a rebours comme le serveur qui dit bonjour mais est un grande mystère sans troubadours! J'ai un secret! Je veux toi et elle danser avec moi! Nous sommes assis a croisée des chemins a un carrefour!

Avec un cerveau géant absorbant un possibilité nouveau grande, je vous donne mes deux mains parce-que la vie est trop triste. Je suis fatigue de mon cœur et je suis être existentialisait purement parce-que je voudrais être cool comme mon guitariste. Tout les dieux connait, mon dieu, ce journée est fou parce-que on doit reconnaître qu'un seul dieu existe et

merde l'futuriste. Mais a le fin de la journée c'est quoi elles dit concernant le pleinairisme qui n'a pas le droit de coexister comme un fondamentaliste? J'ai un secret! Je veux toi et elle danser avec moi! Nous sommes assis a croisée des chemins qui est très bouddhiste!"

"Oh. Wow. I like it & the recovery position," she snorts, or snores, a snort.

"... And do you have a poem for me?" I ask.

"Yes, but in Frolid: I love to call you a faggot, faggot, and it excites me when you look at me as if I have done you wrong, for you are my diagonal aristocrat and I am you only when I want to be. O, guru, let us have a zilch and then you can suck my tits for a decade of milliseconds. I want to fuck you so hard that you forget you're a faggot. Remember that I give you Oreos every time we fuck. I want to finger your ass until you beg me to stop and then I want to lick it clean of our sin until your hardened cock ejaculates into empty air or into my vacant vagina that only ever loves you because you're the worst looking man I have ever seen and I've decided to call you Mister Sanity."

K licks her red lipstick lips circularly.

I shake my head a lot. I frown at her. She frowns back at me. I nod a little.

I remember Xinx. But I don't want to. The rest of the dream is so good, bad or average that I can't remember it, so I will leave

it to your imagination. Personally, I imagine it's dirty beyond dirty, but it's probably cleaner than clean yet bestial beyond bestial. But who says the infinity of dreams must be sexual, anyhow? To be completely honest with you, though, she inserts my dick between her heavy cleavage, moves her breasts up and down, occasionally beating my dick against a black tit. I orgasm vaingloriously & then she lets her vagina swallow my dick, which doesn't decrease in size like you might expect it to.

"I meant to ask you: what does 'K' stand for?" I question.

"Kleopatra. I meant to tell you: if we don't marry, I want our kid to be called Marlene. But if we do marry, I don't want a kid."

"Cool."

"No shit. Want to summon something to eat?"

"Please god, may I have some chocolate?" I speak in tongue.

Natushberry chocolate elegantly appears on the other-side of the room. Sujes was a deluded hacker, but at least I have the courage to make my hack appear to be, for all intents & purposes, a prayer.

"I'm taking care of the chocolate, faggot," Kleopatra says. She clicks her fingers. A hash brownie appears in her hands.

"Remember me?" she says. Now I get a little nervous. I remember Rockland's visionary

advertisement for, or prophecy about, someone called Kleopatra. *"I'm not exactly the mother... I'm not exactly the devil."*

"Excuse you," I laugh now.

She mouths something that doesn't bare repeating.

"Uh..." I say.

"Bot," K says.

"I wouldn't do that," I reply.

"Both," she says, and now I understand just what she is suggesting.

"No. We can't stay... here... not now... not forever," I tell her.

"Both," she repeats, rendering my argument powerless.

"Fuck it."

I fuck her whole, whole-heartedly, up & down, up & down, and she makes sounds like a woman losing her virginity. She poops about half-way through the act. The sound she creates makes me so horny that I eat her shit and wash it down with a little bit of the brownie. I want her so bad that I want anything that has to do with her, even if it involves catching flu, cooties or another contagious virus.

"Laugh," she says.

"No. Your shit doesn't taste very good."

"We're in love," she suggests.

"Okay..." I say.

"Turn me off. "

"I thought I was your angel."

"Okay. Yeah. Ooh... that's good."

"Yeah," I say. "I don't like sex but it's great."

Kleopatra sucks my finger, like in that juvenile way we used to do as teenagers. I don't respond to her. I know how exasperating those stupid fads can be. But she can't suck it off, so she bites it off. The dream concludes horrifically, and I feel a subtle pain when I wake up tied in Velcro and Xinx harasses my belly button with her tongue. I can't believe it. I'm horny.

**THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
CATASTROPHE**

**CHAPTER 3:
MORE SHIT ABOUT MY PAST**

Though I was far from dormant beforehand, I came alive at a crossroads in time.

Some Crayans believed the entirety of the universe would end five years after I was born, while a third of the first world thought itself to be on the precipice of a nuclear apocalypse. Though the majority of mankind understood both prophecies to be somewhat implausible, a herd of a hundred cows outside Gorpegio knocked down the fence in their field and consumed marijuana from a nearby plantation for medicinal purposes, forming a crew – far from cowardly – whom stormed the city and made friends like captives making amends with prison wardens, all nervous and bashful and wondering if the all the journalists typing sentences such as this were going to portray them in the right light.

These cows, finally able to vocalise their thoughts, sought immunity for personal damage from the police department. Three policemen keenly and cheekily posed for a photo. A dozen cows formed a band, making acapella music in bizarre newfound awareness. Even the old Sergeant General came out from

her shack and held hands with a cow, who snacked on strawberry gelato. It became extremely hyper, ran circularly around a post & then shit mercilessly on the Sergeant General's much-prized roses. The Sergeant General wept fearfully after believing herself to be awake and then hooted unenthusiastically after she thought she were so shocked she must be asleep. I witnessed this and didn't say a word. I'd been told it was rude to stare. The anarchy, albeit 'cowed', was but a taster for what I will experience in a coming chapter.

My parents divorced when I was an infant. My father was a great philanthropist boozier, oozing cinematic charisma even when he remained motionless. When he looked, drunk at the dinner table, at my mother, it was simultaneously a confident gaze of glowing savagery and an idolatry glare of wakefulness that any non-blasphemer would reserve for an angel. Perhaps my mother was an angel. It seemed my father thought so anyway. I didn't question why, yet when I looked at him and he sensed my glance, his blue eyes used to well up, in a kind of hysterical sadness, and he would smile at me adoringly. The more he drank, the less he would speak. My mother and father were in love. Or at least I was. I thought they were wonderful people.

We lived in one of those high-rise apartments. Holidays happened every

weekend. I loved cake and scones. Eating was my hobby and profession, but I read poems in my spare time. I even had a Franklin tutor, but she was very impatient and apparently underpaid (I can remember her quitting in fury after I told her that I could speak Franklin more fluently than her and I wasn't even trying - it was a joke, a contrived joke, but I usually cloaked my intelligence and she appeared very hurt by the mere thought of it).

My dad worked in stocks, owned a small computer software company, and I was assured in my aging years that his was not the stare of an alcoholic but that of a shy man in love. Sure, he could drink himself to hell and back, but he didn't ever make it obvious that he was drunk. My friends have noticed this trait in me, so perhaps it runs in the family, like my dyslexia and addictive personality. I smoke a cigarette every hour these days. Otherwise, I get a little nervous. Nicotine patches don't seem to offer any permanent resolution to my habit. Rather, they make me long for that seismic injection of adrenaline into my body, be it to write a report for my latest patient, launch a prostituted statement of resolve towards the moon and forget it by sunrise, or to simply function as an undesirous nicotine junkie.

Last Thursday, I saw my father for the first time in ten years, while working at Toenail Hospital. It's a small building and I

was standing in for the receptionist. He walked in and said, 'Hi'. I didn't know what to say. There wasn't much to say. I was sure it was him, though. He nodded at me. He was in a blue raincoat that matched his eyes. I scratched my head. He burst into tears. I didn't feel like crying, so I didn't. He handed me a package, stuttered something unintelligible and ran out of the building cackling. At the time, I didn't know that this would be the last I would ever see of my dad. I opened the package two days later. Inside it was a cake, a spiff, and 5 nicotine patches wrapped inside a note that read:

'Is the sun so dormant it prefers no sound? This is what I contemplate on the ground: trend less gratuitously personifies the transcendental blend of matrix mushrooms mistakes in barren wastelands we transcend.'

I spent a day thinking about this, analysing it. I decided it really did belong in the canon of famous poems: you know, up there with Homing Problem or Colourful Star. It was a story within a story that told a story. It's not even that it had my blood written all over it. It just seemed to make sense. I'll leave it to you to decide what it means for yourself, but I knew what my dad was getting at. I just don't know why he delivered it and then ran away cackling.

I'm nineteen right now. Suddenly, I decide that it's a waste of time to train as a foot-

doctor. Yeah, I'm sitting at those crossroads you hear about on cassette tapes. I know I've got to express myself and writing has always been a passion of mine, but I don't know what to do about it. I decide to learn to play guitar properly. Rockland volunteers to teach me the basics when I next visit him. He says that there are four barre chord positions, which can be moved up and down the guitar to create the majority of the sounds the guitar's structure is capable of making. He also shows me how to move my four fingers from left to right from low E to high E strings. He tells me to stick with that.

Over the next week, I play that guitar for 100 hours. It's enough to drive a crazy man sane or a sane man crazy. I play one of my old favourites for a few hours and work on my own compositions. I doesn't feel like I am at the crossroads anymore, even though I've lost my job and potential position in society as a foot-doctor. No, I genuinely feel great about the world. My ambition stems purely from my perfectionist streak: to do something & to be one of the best at it... whether I will be recognized for being the best at doing that thing is a separate matter. Anyway, I suppose this implies that I am dedicated to the guitar. My father was or is a trader. My mother... well... my mother died a long time ago. Wishing it didn't happen doesn't change the fact that it did.

My third visit to Rockland in the mental hospital, though, also serves to disintegrate my botched understanding of eternal return in lieu of a more rounded comprehension of its proposals. Rockland seems to know a lot more about eternal return than I do and places more emphasis on the idea that each recurrence would be “*self-similar*”– or “*approximately the same*”– as its predecessor. This intrigues me and makes me contemplate the question in a new way.

While we talk about the concept that he claims, “*may in actuality be an actuality*”, Rockland insists that we walk around the yard in circles to simulate the repetition. He tells me to note that though the circles appeared to be the same they were really quite different circles, proving that with the awareness that you have been here before you can alter the cycle of eternal return completely. Other than that, though, we have a fairly monotonous time talking about schizophrenia (he maintains the disembodied voices are real, whereas I reason that they are constructs of an overactive mind).

There is something uplifting about seeing Rockland. He speaks in his odd manner, simultaneously manically evocative and redolent of a withdrawn man who doesn't know what to do with himself: words leave his mouth as fast as a shooting-star soars across the solar system, like some caged humanoid magician

dishonestly jailed for blaspheming a God that wasn't his own, but he kind of speaks nonsense. When I finally make to leave, he stops me, begging me to stay another while. I oblige and he seems joyous but isn't sure what to do about this either. He asks me if I've seen any cats recently – "*how's your friendship with the felines?*" – and I reply that I still worship every one. He asks me about Xinx – "*how's your missus?*" – and I reply that she's doing well. I joke about his attempts to steal her from my abusive clutches and welcome her back to the world; Rockland smirks wryly, saying, "*You may go back to the world yourself now, yourself, Tonnan.*" I smile to his smirk: both of us know that it wasn't like that, though both of us know too that it is unfortunately close to the truth.

"*See ya, Rockland,*" I say.

"*Bye, Tonnan,*" he says, and he goes again to observe the great big green light installed at a corner of the courtyard for patients to look at and pray to.

Unlike the caged humanoid magician that he briefly appeared to impersonate, Rockland believes in every deity in every Universe. He dreams of God in elated snatches and isn't afraid to admit it. He rejoices in the beauty of arbitrary moments, with an infectious humility that isn't entirely at odds with the paranoid schizophrenic he became. No, Rockland is a creature of his own making,

treading patiently with an eye-to-detail such that each patient step seems now, in my own peculiar imaginings, to be more than just another terse phase on the path to his inevitable demise, signifying instead somehow a vague prequel to the antiquity of thought itself. And so, he gazes & gazes at the great big green light until he finds himself almost more than completely at one with it... a tiny, grotesquely beautiful humanoid desirous of the sum but in the very act of wishing for it exceeding it.

Yes, at least in my eyes, Rockland is a shrewd rebel angel destined to usurp the limitations of his being and in doing so establish another separate, clairvoyant truth that only he is privy to. Rockland believes in a saintly future, in an impossible heavenly epic of bliss that is yet-to-come but is always hovering on the horizon, almost within reach, almost tangible, yet forever twisting & contorting such that the second he believes he's at the top, he realises that he's only just reached the bottom. Then as now, even as the nadir of this undefinable nirvana evades him like a rare Pokémon in one of our Earth's frustrating man-versus-machine strategy video games, he stretches and stretches, striving forwards, onwards, upwards, towards a foreign yet homely infinity discernible only to himself.

Eventually, it will materialise far behind him, but for now, he interminably combs the

atmosphere for the furtive shapes of a figure, a reassurance that he is not lost. The fact that whatever is there is there and whatever is not is not essentially renders his searching ascension obsolete, but parallel to his 'cape-diem' attitude to the world lies a tidal undercurrent of longing for a completely unknown state of being.

On that third visit to him, I didn't want to upset his increasingly delicate temperament by disagreeing with him, but nothing all that terrible had happened to me yet, as his prophecy predicted. It is sure to, however, for though Rockland is legally and medically insane, I still haven't known him to be mistaken about a single thing in the entirety of the time I have known him. Yes, life would start to go wrong for me right about now.

**THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
CATASTROPHE**

**CHAPTER 4:
A SECRET KARMA**

Have you heard the Hunky Williams' song *You Broke Your Heart II*? Sometimes memories occupy a unique, lyrical position in part of you. Sometimes you wish they'd always stay. Sometimes you wish they'd go away.

There are at least two sides to any story worth telling. But everybody loved Ellie. Everybody except for one person. That one person didn't love Ellie: no, she hated Ellie. That one person was Ellie herself. Ellie loved the world but hated herself. Sometimes she curled up in bed and wished that she – her body and the entirety of her being – would leave her alone, cease to exist, become one with the surroundings, become one with the breeze.

And so it goes that I'm not the hero in this chapter nor am I the villain. The hero of this episode is Ellie and the villain of this chapter is Ellie. Ellie hated Ellie, so Ellie is simultaneously the protagonist and the antihero. It doesn't look quite right down on paper, but I've said it in a couple of ways. At the end of this chapter, the hero will die, slayed by the villain. The hero of this story? She had serious problems, to put it bluntly. The villain?

I could hate her, but I don't. There is a secret karma. But Ellie hated Ellie. There are no two ways around it. Me, I'm getting more hysterical by the second. I've got to get something off my chest before we begin properly. I spoke to one of the doctors on my last visit to Rockland. *Apparently*, I'm a schizophrenic, *apparently*.

I can't ascertain why this word was found to be an appropriate label for my condition, but I suppose it's like assigning meaning, or any sort of poetic justice, to an otherwise holistic cityscape. Anyhow, before admitting me entry to see Rockland, the doctor had asked me if I heard voices. I said, "Yes". The doctor nodded and asked a couple more questions, but he must not have understood my meaning. I don't hear unsolicited voices. I mean, sometimes I like to have conversations with my head in my head, but I'm always aware that I'm not actually speaking to someone other than myself. He printed me a certificate officiating my status as a schizophrenic, yet I am reticent to take his words at face value. I'm not *really* a *schizophrenic*.

(No, I'm the sanest man in this body of insane men. The rest of my brain cells have appointed me to talk with you for that reason specifically., I feel better about the diagnosis now; I don't think my mental health disorder will colour my telling of this story in general, but don't say I didn't warn you.)

Right now, it's pissing down out there. God's speciality in the rainy season. Good news for the flowers and good news for the people that want to drink. Good news even for those whose revenue stream is reliant on the phrase 'no news is good news' resounding true. No. Not much has changed. Apparently.

It's 2 A.M. – the Restralardin Lock is deserted at this time of the night. The path running by Restralardin Canal is occasionally inhabited by someone trying to get home or someone trying to find a place to call home; a homeless drunkard, under the cover of a donated umbrella, tries to explain to a woman that he falls into the second category. A cormorant makes a gaudy display of flamboyantly calling to his mate who returns his cry with a fervour tinged by traces of regret, as if her ostentatiousness were put on primarily to humour the listener. A mysterious genderless entity with a backpack walks by. I take a sip of coffee. It tastes bitter; it's probably because of the way that I brewed it this time, but it's as if until now I never appreciated how bitter coffee can taste. I'm usually good at making coffee. Grr. I sigh.

Ellie lives next door to me. Our flats overlook Restralardin Canal. She's twenty-five. I'm nearly the other side of twenty. My reluctance to divulge an exact figure can be attributed to the happenstance that I enjoy the

phrase the 'other side' and the fact that I don't know exactly what day I was born, but the attentive reader should know that I believe myself to be nineteen.

Anyway, back to the real heart of this chapter. Where do I start? It's strange that I feel stumped when trying to describe Ellie. It's not as if Ellie is boring or anything like that: no, the reality is a world apart from that. Perhaps I'm having trouble cataloguing her as an individual because humanoids in essence defy categorisation.

Physically, Ellie falls a little short of five-foot-tall and has deep slender red-yellow eyes, eyes that can express certainty, but also articulate doubt (personally I am often quite uncomfortable when confronted with two red-yellow eyes but that is another anecdote that is best relegated to realms of paranoia reserved only for myself). Her red hair runs down to her bra-line. To call her hair 'fuzzy' would be wrong, but it is certainly messy. Somehow you got the feeling that she takes pride in its manifestation. I guess you could say that it is as anarchic as her personality. She is up one minute and down the next. You never can tell with her. I'd say that she would stand out in a crowd due to her unpretentious beauty and her manner of walking: her overall look is jaunty, with indie clothes to match and, though her legs aren't particularly long, she has a real spring to her step.

Anyway, at exactly 2 A.M. the doorbell rings. At first, I don't feel like opening the door and attending to whoever's there at this dim hour. Xinx certainly doesn't either, judging by the way she turns over upon hearing that wretched sound. Though I'm in a good mood, I'm a firm believer in the phrase 'no news is good news'... besides, it might be the police following up in the complaint of a dope-like smell emanating from my garden or, even worse, Sujes followers resolute it is in the interest of greater society to spread the word of their God in the middle of the night. But then curiosity gets the better of me and I walk through the hall and open my front door. It's Ellie. This is Ellie.

At this moment in her life, Ellie is inebriated and spritely yet soggy and groggy. After opening the door, the first thing that I notice about her is that she has pierced her ears so that they can accommodate a circular 'gong' of black metal. I'm not sure whether 'gong' is the correct word for such a fixture, but the studs make her ears look pretty big. They are quite novel to look at, actually. In my mind, they resemble equipment used by aliens from another planet – I can imagine a tiny gold man pressing his relatively small but comparatively large earlobe and thus suddenly shapeshifting into a vulture (or teleporting to another planet).

"I haven't slept for three days" are the first words that come out of Ellie's mouth.

"I haven't ever been awake for more than two," I tell her.

"May I come in?" she says, sauntering past me into the living room.

"Coffee?" I ask.

"Coffee..." she says as if that is the first time she has said the word, as if she is pondering its genesis or wondering if the word has a second meaning. *"Black and two sugars. I love your coffee,"* she says. The reason why she almost always mentions her affectionate feelings towards my coffee when she comes around is that I have started working in a coffee shop on weekends to subsidise my sedentary existence and I can add that special magic touch to every cup I serve. Or maybe it's because I have an exotic strain of coffee seed imported from Coza.

"Coming right up. How are you?" I say to her.

"Well... to tell you the truth... I've taken pills that are going to send me to sleep."

"What?" I say, trying to prevent panic from entering my tone.

"I'm going to die. Yes..." she declaims happily yet feebly, *"I'm going to die soon. Soon to you. But soon to you feels like forever to me. Do you know how long I've waited for this day?"*

"Are you drunk?" I say, averting her question.

"Yes, I'm drunk," she says, "I'm very tipsy. In fact, I think I'm getting tipsier by the second. What does it mean to be in love to you?"

Ellie laughs and hiccups.

"Are you okay?" I ask, continuing my own line of questioning as the kettle finishes boiling.

"Okay? Yeah. I'm better than okay. I'm... I'm in love. What does it mean to be in love to you?" she repeats curiously on the sofa, blinking her eyes as if she were getting accustomed to a new quality of light.

"Well... I guess the phrase 'in love' implies something of a sexual nature. To be in love means you would do anything for that person. I guess those words put together implies a kind of infatuation, don't you think?" I say.

"I love you," she slurs, and suddenly falls asleep forever, dead as a dream, still as stone. I dial an ambulance, but it's too late. They cannot resuscitate her.

In the coming weeks I try to make sense, but cannot, of what could have happened to Ellie. I ruminate & ruminate & ruminate upon it until I wonder if she ever existed at all or if she was just a figment of my (allegedly) schizophrenic imagination. All things

considered, I make little leeway. While I am writing my speech for her funeral at my desk – though she had a few friends, they were scattered and none could face writing a memorial address – Xinx puts her hands on my shoulder and massages me.

“You know... it still hasn't crystallised that she's gone... Ellie was someone I didn't think I would outlive. It didn't ever occur to me, so it just doesn't seem real,” she says.

“Yeah...” I say, *“well, that's how it is. She was there one second and gone the next.”*

“Let me know if you need anything. I'm going to smoke a cigarette. I've felt the urge to for a while,” she says.

“Soon I will be dead forever,” I tell her, suddenly fuming with righteous indignation.

“Won't we all?” she mouths to me behind my back.

Yes, perhaps there is a secret karma to the mechanisations of reality's heart. Before we were born, we were nothing, and after we die, we will be nothing: this delicate equation balances on the virtuous assumption of every being's essential equality at birth, but there is nothing innately immoral about any five-minute old child. Translating my thoughts into words, it occurs to me, finally, that death is analogous to total non-existence, like how you were – say – five years before you were born, back when your state was characterised by a complete lack of consciousness, of nothingness.

You can say whatever you want about Ellie's death: call it a tragedy, call it good-riddance, but there was a secret karma to it, too. Her desire to die was fulfilled, as I hope all her dreams were before her passing. Reflecting upon her life, though, while it was said her eyes sparkled sequences of sacred arithmetic by a male admirer of hers, there too must have been a secret sorrow to her cheerfulness, a hidden heart that she couldn't help but hide. I speak at Ellie's funeral in a few days' time; I will recite an ambitious rhyming poem entitled 'Coffee in Heaven'.

THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
CATASTROPHE

CHAPTER 5:
MATING SEASON

“Why are you having so many wet-dreams lately?” Xinx asks me, after one of her long trips to the library.

“I don’t know,” I respond.

“Maybe I haven’t been keeping you occupied enough. Shall we go to the park?” she asks.

“Okay,” I say.

We lock the apartment and walk to the park.

The sprawling cityscape, swollen by the suffocated gargoyles and by the ruins of the war, is overruled by flora, dressed by florescent dreams and thirsty longing for brown in a parka-jacket laden frenzy of love and loathing. The remnants of rain trickle down the trunks of wooden guardians, where the wood-peckers rasp in unison demoralizing the partisan priest whose every particle vibrates to the veneer of the unsaved saviour who gloats feverishly about the souls that he has saved while secretly wondering if it is they that have resigned themselves to the prayer of select pawns whose dreams of destroying matter in such a malicious way materialised. The solace of the

soaring senses of the dying or buried soldiers by the graveyard whose nicotine pressure harked back to the lines of the ones who stare at the sun silently willing it to kill their eyesight and my gosh it will not retreat in its serpentine splendour; if you stare at it too long you will start to feel less lucid and the sun will deplete its visionary worldview from sight like a pathetic professor vacantly declaring that it is he that wrote the magna carta and why else should he share the first name of the character in the book. The drinkers make and break plans at the inn where their ideas tumble like ashes from a colossal cigarette reinventing the bleeding devolution of words.

We arrive at the park and sit on a bamboo bench.

"Tell me," Xinx says.

"It's mating season for the elephants," I say.

"And?" she says, pretending not to be exacerbated with me.

"Elephants are my favourite creatures, other than Atornan..." I hesitate, before saying, *"If I were to construct my own dreams, you would be there in every one."*

"You are all I've ever wanted, I'd gladly confess," she says, *"You are all I've been cheated out of, more or less."*

"I couldn't love you more," I tell her.

"The feeling's mutual," Xinx says.

My phone buzzes colours in my pocket. I don't pick it up immediately. I suspect it's a call from Kleopatra, who I have only met for about thirty seconds, though I dreamt about her. It is.

"Hello? Is this the man I met in the skatepark?" K asks sheepishly yet insistently.

"Hi. I'm out with my girlfriend," I say.

"I want to meet your girlfriend. Where are you?"

"Wonderwill park. On the bench by the elephant enclosure," I divulge, then wonder why I have.

"I'll see you in ten minutes," K says.

In the meantime, Xinx and I share a conversation about whether I should grow my beard (I decide not to), whether we should take a break (we decide not to), whether ant colonies are capable of living inside elephants (we decided not too), and finally whether we are inside a creature (of course we are) before K arrives. K is wearing a green onesie, looks terribly slutty and addresses Xinx.

"Hello. Kleopatra. I got your boyfriend's number, not because I fancy him, but because he has nice eyes. It's been a while since I've seen eyes like that. Green, brown and blue. What a combination. What do you make him do to possess such eyes?"

"Oh. There's a lot of foreplay. Foreplay is constant. We're even flirting now," Xinx threatens vaguely.

I smile. K nods at me. I blink. Xinx kisses me on the eyelid.

"Oh. Okay," K says, hurriedly taking her time with these three syllables. She turns to me. *"I had a dream about you last night,"* she confesses.

"Oh?" I ask, scared about the ramifications of that phrase.

"Yes. We were in the jungle. There was a massive Chinowap on the loose and you had to protect me from him."

"Was it erotic?" Xinx asks dubiously.

"Not very. Mostly just scary... come to think of it, though, we did smooch at the end."

There is a crude silence of fifteen seconds, spasmodically interrupted by the chirping of butterfly-bats.

"Well, this is awkward," K says.

"No, it's foreplay," Xinx says. *"You just haven't been invited."*

How stupid, I think in my head. I'll remember this half-dead.

"Oh," K whispers to me. *"I like this bit."*

Two elephants approach. One looks aroused.

"They're fat, ripe for the consumption trade," Xinx says.

"Just like my bosoms," K says to Xinx.

I shrug. I can't remember the jungle. It starts pissing down lilac alcohol. I open my mouth to the heavens.

"Oh. You still do that?" K asks.

"I thought I cured him of the habit when we were teenagers," Xinx says.

"Oh, you knew him back then?" K says, over the instrumentation of rain.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," I say, happily.

I remember the bewildering words of my friend the Buddhist, *"and at the end they all suck him"*, but I realize reality doesn't resemble the teachings of a science text, so corrupted by... oh, shit... the elephants are at it. My two companions look at me, Xinx's silver eyes almost pushing me away and the winterly whorish Kleopatra's sizing me up me like a hunter.

I hum in finite melody, keeping to the rhythm of the elephant's ecstasy as much as I can.

K farts. It smells like her shit does. It's a neither pleasant nor unpleasant scent. It smells a little like an apple and an orange mixed together, almost putrid but lovely.

"No, no, no!" I exclaim.

"Let's go back to the apartment," Xinx says. She sighs. *"All three of us, if you want."*

"Yes. Okay. Sure," Kleopatra says.

"Why not?" I say.

Xinx unlocks the door. Immediately we are both taken aback. The apartment looks absurdly abhorrent. Something has gone

deeply awry. An army of ants inhabits the artichoke basket which, once abundant with artichokes, is abound with an abysmal autopsy of artichoke shells.

"That's it, then. We must go absolutely abstentious," I say.

Something else is missing but I can't figure out what it is. How did the ants acquire access to the apartment? What is answerable for this?

"Oh... it's not that bad. You can just account for the fact that I don't particularly like artichokes and act accordingly," Kleopatra says.

I smile. Xinx does too.

"Well, I don't want to kill them. Let's just tempt them outside by carrying the artichoke basket outside," Xinx says.

"They're in the artichoke basket," I try to explain.

"What if there are more ants outside?" K asks fearfully.

"I guess they'll meet their maker," Xinx replies.

Xinx picks up the artichoke basket & takes it outside to the balcony, where she drops it and stares out at the sky.

"Holy shit. Holy shit," Xinx says, fixated on the sky.

"What?" I ask.

"You'll have to come and see this," Xinx says.

"Fuck. Fuck. Let's go," K says to me, excitedly.

K & I go out to the balcony. The sky is ablaze with water. There is lightning everywhere. I don't know how else to describe it, but that's exactly how it is. Pyramid-shaped meteors are wed to chariots without anyone on them. Snow is pouring down. Things have really changed in the past minute.

"Woah... this must be the apocalypse," I say.

"Shit!" K twitches. *"Let's get inside."*

K and I go inside, but Xinx just stands there, ogling at the scene.

"It's so..." Xinx begins, *"so... so..."*

Then, suddenly, without warning, just like that, a pyramid meteor wed to a chariot heads straight for her beautiful half-azure-half-black body.

"XINX! XINX!" I shout.

Shit! Shit! The pyramid meteor wed to a chariot beheads Xinx and crashes into the door. Her blood splatters everywhere.

"Oh, my god!" Kleopatra cries, uselessly.

I'm howling now. *"XINX. XINX. XINX..."* I shout desperately, as if somehow repeating her name will resuscitate her soul from the reservoir of memory.

"Oh, my god."

"Crap. Crap. Crap."

"Oh, my god."

"Shit. Shit. Shit..."

"Oh, my god." K looks horrified, disgusted and frightened.

"Say something else, you fucking idiot," I say, *"That's my girlfriend."*

"Shit. Shit. I forgot to warn you," K says with the air of a politician about to deliver an apology. *"Things like this often tend to happen when you're with me."*

"Huh?" I say.

"I hack the oversoul..." she says. *"There can be the occasional brief malfunction."*

"Well, bring Xinx back from the dead, then. Life seems to be one big catastrophe since I met you."

"You'll have time to think about that."

"What, for the rest of my life?!" I ask, angrily.

"No, after we fuck," K says.

If this chapter feels stiflingly short or incomplete, it's because I feel such a range of emotions following Xinx's decapitation: committing them to paper makes me feel nauseous as hell. In summary, what happened afterwards was this: a man on a megaphone somewhere in the vicinity orders everyone to *"GET INSIDE OR STAY INSIDE"* and the pyramids brided to chariots are shot down using military technology; the skies resume service as normal; Kleopatra comforts me in

the inauguration of insanity

my grief, ends up becoming my close confidant and staying with me in the apartment. And, you know, two nights from the Xinx-decapitation-mini-apocalypse saga, we form a pact: as friends, as lovers, as seekers of salvation. We would find Xinx, together.

THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
THE MOTHER OF INFINITY

CHAPTER 1:
I'LL DIE A DREAMER
BUT I ADORE A LOT OF
ALLITERATION

I was the reclusive scientist-guitarist-
painter who climbed skies in his art.

K was the elusive femme fatale who
started my heart.

When my tongue made her come, she
howled "God's your mother!" I laughed at first,
but then I thought about what K had said.

It started out simple: a preliminary pact with
the oversoul, one of the many bargains we
made with God. We lived together and died
together and lived together and here we are.

In the missionary position, K & I
entwine on the cliff.

Before we jump to our physical death,
we recite from memory something akin to the
following: $_ + _ =$ so therefore $_ = _$, then
we jump through this world into another.

*"Ladies and gentlemen, what you are currently
hearing is not the voice of god."*

the inauguration of insanity

52,535,513 French fireflies freeze in fear,
9,423 Cambodian cashiers clutch their ears
And an eighth of the snakes in the Sahara gaze
at the sky.

*“This is neither the heart of the apocalypse, nor
the start of an advertisement.”*

54,424 sleeping squirrels squeak in their sleep,
723 protestant preachers pinch their left cheek
And almost all the babies in Babylon begin to
cry.

*“This is neither a mutation of your
imagination, nor a flirtation with your
salvation.”*

97,425 startled shopkeepers shut up shop,
142 Croatian contortionists call the cops
And a herd of hippopotamuses howl at the
heavens.

*“With that said, my name is Gabriel and I am
here to save you all. Listen carefully and don’t
panic.”*

103,353 psychiatrists piss in their pants,
45,425 Latvian lovers loop hands
And someone named Sam picks his nose
somewhere in Devon.

The mysterious voice is silent for seven
seconds, and then a very strange but very
beautiful song plays.

1,020,220 turtles tumble into a trance,
5456 Turkish twins begin to dance
And one tenth of all creatures spontaneously
orgasm.

*"I hope you enjoyed that as much as I did. Take
it as a small token of my peaceful intentions."*

143,353 synchronised swimmers smile,
1,532 joyful judges adjourn a trial
And a platoon of pensioners shoot the sky to
thank him.

*"I should preface by stressing the importance
of not contorting this message."*

243,214 Finnish fingers finger a cigarette,
942 broken stockbrokers break a sweat
And seven squads of secret servicemen
simultaneously sigh.

*"Have I contorted this message by stressing the
importance of this preface?"*

153,241 blue butterflies flutter to a flower,
67 scared scientists scour a meteor shower
And a fistful of fiery-thighed lovers fall into
the other's eyes.

“Well, I did my best, and I guess that I successfully stressed the blessed mess of expression.”

53,432 badly bent backs in Bangkok straighten,
366 certifiably sane Cypriotes shout ‘Satan’
And a news reporter reports he has nearly
nothing to say.

*“But I shall not speak in tongues. I am Gabriel
and I am here to save you all. Listen carefully
and don’t panic.”*

The mysterious voice is silent for seven
seconds, and then a very strange but very
beautiful song plays.

The sentimental, sentient sense of an
impending doom hangs heavy over the
harbour of dreams tonight. A lonely couple of
fishing boats are anchored to your right,
swaying violently with the unbridled pull of
the tide, which could climax into a deafening
crescendo at any point. The horizon is a heroic
haze of two adjacent planets. Photograph it and
your camera will melt. Such equipment is not
permitted here anyway, for the idea of freezing
any soul forever is sacrilegious. Close but not
within eyesight, a parrot perches on a pirate’s

panama on a ship that has just landed,
serenading itself torpidly with a sea shanty
designed to lull the listener to sleep with its
onomatopoeia. You are sitting close enough to
read a rusty metal sign by a solitary abandoned
market stand where they sell fresh fruit and
vegan vegetables to the deities during the day;
it proclaims, *Welcome to Hunfora!*

A shambolic seaside purity sweeps
through the surroundings, continually
conquering the air with the aroma of a nomad
nothing. Imagine, if you will, that the ability to
smell is the only sensory consciousness your
being possesses, and that this non-entity of a
scent is all you will ever experience. And –
yeah! that's it: the only existing moment will
occur the instant you understand the meaning
of this paragraph and – there! bam! – you are
death itself and have no present, past or future!

But don't worry, friend: now a soft spray
sprinkles the moonlit evening beach and
hydrates your face. On top of that, you can
hear the ominous rumble of thunder, which is
almost definitely one of God's generous gifts to
Gaea and perhaps represents a consecrated
projection of His grumpy disposition or
hallowed horniness.

The sand is adorned with footprints
which will dissipate into a uniform flatness,
irrespective of the level of urgency with which
their architect crafted them. An apparently
ownerless Cocker Spaniel vigorously digs a

hole, which is now surprisingly deep, and sits in it. With some care, a birdwatcher expresses her barely containable jubilation at the presence of a Crested Ibis perched on the rocks with its bald red head by taking a selfie with the rare bird; the photograph appears in National Birdwatcher some five months later.

Meanwhile, the suicide sunlight has finally committed to a previously dormant streak of nihilism and abandoned the area, leaving only a faint trace of its heated soliloquy. Streetlights illuminate the fountain in the centre of the nearby square, which is inanimate but for the passage of an occasional tourist. The heroes of our story sit hand-in-hand on the edge of the pier.

The boy and girl are so unambiguously hip yet Neolithic you might vainly and in vein try to delude yourself they remind you of your former self. Disillusioned with the world in the sanguine way that only teenagers can be, their mouths do not care for the exhausted cornucopia of civilization's clichéd conversational topics. No, they speak sentimentally in an accented patois about a faraway world. Though they have known each other properly since they were in their early twenties, they are thirteen and fifteen.

“Déjà...” the girl whispers wistfully.

“Ha! Ya. Been shorter than a barfly’s thigh,” the boy replies, followed by a sigh, which within you gives rise to the sense that he

stands on the fence as to whether he should try to exorcise the demons he can't disguise.

"I yearn for... I don't know," she says.

"Long for a song?" he asks.

"An imperfect melody," she states absentmindedly, and you know instinctively just what she means.

Below their feet, the docks and water fight, and in the local pub the old soul singers sing a song until the soul emerges light. The boy hums along after recognising the song's mathematical paradox. The girl covers her ears in mock disdain. They shouldn't be here. But they are. For now.

**THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
THE MOTHER OF INFINITY**

**CHAPTER 2:
CONVENTIONAL SENSE OF THE
WORD**

Through modifications in the coding of reality, we were able to give ourselves average-sized brains and startling good looks. In the mist of our third life, we lived in a highly populated world that became barren. Nowadays, we sketch imaginary worlds, paradises and places of torment, and enter them after smoking enhanced drugs that we acquired from a stranger at the real crossroads.

Kleopatra is not beautiful in the conventional sense of the word, but in a way that seems to blur your expectation of beauty. She is, without a doubt, the prettiest woman I have ever seen.

Your stupendous friend shyly strips as 'Stardust' plays.

Her breasts are mammoth, and her eyes are purple haze.

You thank the watching God above for visible love.

She purses her lips and undoes your zip with her glove.

Her tongue darts back and forth up your

growing erection.

And then her lips give it a sentimental
blowing inspection.

She mounts you, you kiss blissfully, and
you fuck forever.

In your blinded mind your bodies are
still stuck together.

*“My foe, my tits are an unspeaking
accomplice in your act,”* she says. Together,
you fall into dreamless sleep in each other’s
arms, like solipsists tied to a crucifix.

It’s early January and snow has
blossomed unexpectedly like a pimple on the
centre of your face. We go the woods. There is
a deep incline at their entrance, an almost
mountainous knoll. As I hold hand with K and
skip down the snow-lit hill, our coupled
footprints fallen fragments of our laughing
feet and the moon the only uncomplicated
witness to the dawn of our midnight tryst, I
imagine for a moment that we are the last
people alive, that the internal rhythm of our
legs is the sole human testament to the
glorious accident of nature, that the trees are
secret ornaments to the aimlessness of our
pilgrimage, that the firmaments have
translated the burden of their restlessness into
the premonition of a paradise we were never
meant to find. At the bottom we roll around a
bit beneath the great white woods and make a

baby snowman. We stand back to observe our sentimentality and K replaces her ownership of my hand with that of a now erect knob. We fuck there, as if to eternalise the fragility of our perfect monument. Once I forgot everything for a moment and it was beautiful.

Those who see the God above who never knew the pain of bliss.

Those like me dream of love with one like you on nights like this.

As is our custom, we turn on the television at 9pm to watch the President's daily address. The President is a greying, muscular figure. He wears a tight white t-shirt, sits at desk and speaks directly into the camera.

"God bless you for turning on the television set," he slurs.

"God bless me for staying alive to talk to you," he chuckles.

"It's all just a show! Have a laugh! Create things! You may no sooner know me than your Great Uncle who died in the forty-two years of the God War!" He flexes his muscles at the camera and grins.

"May God bless the mess of expression. I remember the time my dad told me to shut the door because the birds were talking to him via telepathy. I was seven and I didn't know what telepathy was, and come to think of it neither did he," the President sighs gratuitously.

*“Here are fifteen Peruvian parrots
singing a song;” he smiles.*

*A fiendish faction of Peruvian parrots
sing a song,*

*“A bird slurred a song of sorrow he borrowed
from tomorrow's awe.*

*A cat purred along as she heard the third's
absurd swoop and soar.*

*It's half of infinity squared, a shared laugh, a
prayer to time's shore.*

*The chords run towards the sun and climb the
stairs to rhyme's door.*

*Nature's law dictates fate creates a gate before
you explore the core.*

*And it's a hurricane of cocaine in chains as
champagne raindrops pour.*

*But words can't explain the pain of bliss of the
refrain's sublime score.*

*Picture this volcano where earthly ecstasy
loads*

*To return her dreams in a burning stream that
flows*

*Into the snow forest where mercy grows like a
rose*

*And algebraic angels compose acid odes in a
doze,*

*Painting the paradigm of a paradise no saint
knows*

*Where death has no foes and the hurricane
sows*

*The codes of the unknown into celestial rainbows
As the lone saxophone blows and desire explodes.”*

Geez, a man in an apartment block near Camden town station thinks, *they sing it like fucking virtuosos*. He gets up and runs to Marty's guitars. He buys a guitar, takes it to a bench outside the shop and starts to play it. *He's a fucking virtuoso*. The beauty of the parrot's song taught him how to play like a fucking virtuoso. It was acid. A crowd of some fifty people gathers to watch him play. After being signed to Distrokid records by a bystander, he writes a song called '*Bird Volcano Event*' and it gets top of the charts in Oklahoma. A distant cousin of mine gives me the chip and it's on the Music Maker in our room.

In our room, there is an ashtray, condoms, notebooks, a music maker, a computer and a stash of hashish. I always sleep on the left side of the bed and K on the right. I don't know why it's this way; it has always been so: a fact, like the blueness of the sky or the traversable nature of the multiverse. The rigidness of our sleeping positions seems to me to be an indication that we are aware of our own mortality and the finite nature of our stay in the physical plane, even if heaven is made of flesh.

We have a Star-Roof and often lie in bed gazing at the stars. I observe my visible universe and wonder whether my diaries will one day be translated into an alien language. I'm no mathematician but the odds of this are not high. If infinity is real, though, this sentence has been written many times. But I suppose that infinity is difficult to contemplate unless you are god. Sometimes I find it hard to contemplate even my own life. For people like me, infinity is a fairy tale.

Somehow I imagine that infinity is something that can only be experienced by a woman. I don't know why I think this, but with no one available to compare the genders' sexual responses, this is a theory impossible to disprove.

I can still remember meeting K by the skatepark & thinking she was beautiful & there being a clash between our two minds but our bodies digging each other & two months later telling her 'suck me senseless and I'll fuck you to infinity' stoned out of my mind after realizing my penis is my head & it dawning on me that was mind and body and soul... then we fucked a sublime lifetime & giggled on rich hash brownies & felt each other & drank coffee in Hapino & died of old age & went back all the way with modifications half in an attempt to find Xinx & half in an attempt to get as much pleasure as possible & we were reborn one block away from each other & charmed

our parents with lies & then had sex as seven and nine-year-old kids & it felt so right because we were not aware that we had programmed the universe to orchestrate itself such that it happened... and so I shambled back through the midnight haze, drunken figure dancing past the drunken world like the vision of a love story gone wrong, dancing to the sad and soundless music that wide-eyed dreamers make as they fall like rain, shackled by their own fantasies, suffocated by their own memories, but dancing, dancing in a crazy breathless reverence for life and feeling – brain screaming, soul bleeding, mind running, heart gunning – but feeling... feeling feelings and feeling is the only thing that ever mattered to me in this world so I was the happiest I've ever been being the saddest I've been because I realised that it all meant something.

Now K and I are spooning and looking at the stars.

"I believe in first love," K says.

"You may be my last love," I reply solemnly, "I want to stargaze to an infinity not possible with the amount of atoms in my eyes."

"Next time round?"

I shake my head. *"I hope there won't be a next time we're here. We said it would be the last time last time."*

"Let's get to heaven."

"I want to finally find Xinx," I say. "I

don't particularly enjoy your cooking, and I don't want all this universe traversing, or hopping, or whatever you want to call it, to be for nothing."

Five minutes later, I fall asleep and that night I dream I am talking to Bob Dylan. We are sitting on my grandparents' swing in a swanky apartment in reading town centre. My grandma worked as a postman and my granddad worked in the railway industry. Bob Dylan is in a Hawaiian t-shirt and looks dapper, his hair dyed blonde and every wrinkle a document of the wisdom of age.

"I believe in love at first sight," Dylan says. "We're hyper intelligent creatures. I remember seeing Johanna for the first time. It felt as if I had known her all my life, but she still embodied all the ancient mysteries that make life so curious. One gaze into the cryptic depths of her brown eyes was enough to make me re-evaluate my entire existence. But I was shy and barely spoke to Johanna. Some mysteries are best left unexplored or left until later life."

The dream, almost an omen of a direction home, fades to purple. When I wake up the next day, I think of the Johanna I knew. But I was shy and barely spoke to Johanna. I realize these are the exact words Dylan used so I figure my brain made that dream up, unlike other dreams I have had where there was a real sense of the presence of the other.

The next day, something crackles through the letterbox. It's a handwritten note that reads:

Do not trust the government. The government is corrupt. Words fail like snails.

I want to throw it away, but K later takes it to be framed and now it's in our bathroom, of all places. I smile at it sometimes as I relieve myself but always a bit begrudgingly because frankly, I find it depressing and if comedy is its aim it fails too. It's handwritten, though, so it's pretty cool, I reason. I don't necessarily admire the President, but to call him a fascist is perhaps to take things a little too far.

As we make beans on toast and brew coffee, K and I talk about the prospect of revolution.

"... and then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me," I lecture, without wanting to appear as if I'm lecturing.

"Yes, but who have they come for?" K asks.

"I don't know, but just because I don't know doesn't mean it hasn't.

Consider the situation with the police and that lady down the road who disappeared with them a month ago, for example..." I reply.

"That's the second time you've brought it up this week and I still don't know why she's not around," K says. *"What isn't free about this place, though?"*

“The press isn’t free. The press never has been free. Like all human enterprise it is chained to itself. We’re not allowed to do anything to harm others. And this society’s obsessed with heaven. I bet soon we’ll be building a factory of well-fed microorganisms so that more souls can get to heaven,” I guess.

“Not a bad idea. Still, maybe that note meant nothing. It’s a piece of art, or at least I thought it was.”

There is a silence that accentuates the normality of the situation.

“Do you want to go out tonight?”

“Let’s go to the circus and look for Xinx,” K says. *“She may not be as you remember her, but she will certainly be humanoid.”*

“Not a bad idea,” I reply.

The morning unfolds like this: Kleopatra watches Polarised Morning while I sketch alien dinosaurs, looking up at the television occasionally. We go on the subway to see the circus. There is nothing exceptional about the journey other than the fact that a man in sunglasses stares at K. I look at him inquiringly, he looks at me contemptuously, then he looks back at K almost angrily.

At the circus the jugglers are the clowns and one rides a unicycle as others throw raspberry pies at him. That clown looks a lot like me, I think. He is a bit fatter than me, but I

feel like eating a raspberry pie and if I were him, I would try to catch them with my mouth. I survey the tent but there are no other raspberry pies to be seen. I blink nervously and sink in my seat; I feel somewhat agitated by the lack of raspberry pies for sale. I'm not addicted to any kind of food, but almost everyone would be happier if they gave us free raspberry pies at the circus. I voice this thought to K, who nods her head in a way that makes me think I am going mad.

The next day, I go to work and get a promotion. This surprises me. I don't think I am a particularly good employee, but my sweat-drenched boss tells me otherwise, patting me on the head.

"You're just what this company needs," my boss says, *"You have some fucking fantastic ideas."*

It is not particularly like my boss to swear or sweat, so I am a bit alarmed. After a millisecond of reflection on his comment, I realise that I mentioned the circus and raspberry pies to Marcus.

"Thanks a lot," I say. *"I'll take my girlfriend to the circus to celebrate. We had an enjoyable time last night, but we will bring our own raspberry pie."*

"Fucking fantastic!" he says enthusiastically. *"A circus and half of a raspberry pie. Fucking fantastic."*

"A new catch phrase?" I ask.

“No, I’ve been told that people find me a little uptight, so I’ve been trying to expand my vocabulary.” My boss strokes his stubble pensively. *“What do you say we go to the Sepulchre after work for a few drinks?”*

The Sepulchre is a modern metropolis, but by the time you receive this it will be ancient. The politicians and writers chat there, drinking and laughing on the pavilion. They are carefree, arrogant in their taste yet artless in the enterprise of living. The Neon Subway cars race to the Sepulchre. Although there is seemingly not a lot that they can get wrong, the drivers are crazy. They accelerate to unnecessary speeds and then break ridiculously. I once had ambitions to work as one but after a background check my application was rejected.

On the Neon Subway, my boss puts his work clothes into a bag, donning a denim jacket over his shirt and ostentatiously bright blue jeans over his suit trousers. I yell over the subway sound that I once owned a pair of ostentatiously blue jeans like that, but my girlfriend told me to throw them out.

He nods gravely and doesn’t say a word. I feel a little bit stoned, both by his response and my forthrightness in having the nerve to tell him that.

“There will be an accident on the train, and we will narrowly avoid a tragedy,” he suddenly says solemnly.

“Great,” I say sardonically, and next thing you know it, our train and another train collide, my boss and I hit heads, and the scene plunges into darkness.

THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
THE MOTHER OF INFINITY

CHAPTER 3:
A HOSPITAL ADMISSION

I dream I am speeding down Route 42. I look to my left. Rockland is driving, wearing aviator sunglasses. He tells me about his analysis of license plates.

“You pick any random license plate and figure out what it means to you.”

“Can you give me an example?” I ask him.

“See that one. BSTPL8. BullShit Troubles People who Look like the number ‘8’. I can deduct from this plate that you shouldn’t bullshit people with stereotypically attractive forms. It can be read in more than one way, too: for example, if you read that as Be Sexually Transmitted, Period’s L8... then it’s sort of a message that you should act a little more sexually infectious because your period is late,” Rockland says. *“I don’t know. It could mean any number of things. It’s best to analyse, if you can, one license plate every five seconds. Go ahead: you try. It’s kind of like word-association”.*

I do, finding that Dwarves Know the Future if they’re Above the Age of 8, Speeding Motorcycles Suggest Childish H8, Love Is Louisiana With Crayfish 1 (... WON?!).

“Does ‘i’ mean I have won something?” I ask Rockland.

“*Could be. Who knows?*” Rockland tries, and fails, to hide his annoyance by feigning amusement – this is clearly not how he plays the license plate game. “*We can the play the license plate game however we want to. There are really no winners or losers. But if you think you’ve won, you’ve won. The next licence plate you look at, double its significance.*”

The next license plate I look at is ‘RIPXBY3’. I calculate. Rockland Iam Percival Xinx Befaim Yabtosh 3, the amount of times those two have had sex. Could be. Who knows? Or do I have to double its significance as Rockland says? Is Rockland the master-controller of destiny?

I dream I am watching Xinx on a carousel. Round & round & round she goes, and on the fourth rotation I notice that she is wearing a gold crown. I wave to her, but she doesn’t seem to notice. She looks like she is really enjoying herself.

A strange sensation envelops me. It is as if I am not me but someone else. I remember only the essential details of my life, as if I have only been provided with a mere summary of my own existence. I try to picture K but cannot. Then I realise that I *am* K and in my mind’s eye I see an amber line connecting our souls to

form one being. But that state of consciousness only lasts a second and as I wake up in a hospital bed the memories that comprise my life flood back to me. I look to my left and see my boss unconscious in another bed, tucked up & resting peacefully but looking ten years older than I remember him. I look to my right and see K gazing out a window in a leather jacket and velvet jeans, a combination that I have never seen before.

I grunt and she turns.

"Hello!" K says.

"Hello. Where are we?"

"Saint Chads. I was wondering when you were going to wake up. They said you were going to wake up, but they wouldn't tell me when."

"I'm as awake as I ever was. I'm okay. How long was I out?"

"A good two hours. I'm glad you're okay. They said you lost several thousand brain cells but that's hardly any. Did you feel that thing too?" K touches her ear ponderously. I feel slightly cross at her, but I don't know why.

"What does 'thing' mean?" I ask.

She doesn't laugh, only narrows her eyes slightly, looking at me as if I must know what she is talking about. I pretend to gather my lackadaisical thoughts together, but I do know what she is talking about.

"Oh, that," I say. *"Yes, in the unknown between the coma and death, I felt I almost*

became you." It almost looks sarcastic written down, but I meant what I said.

"I had that feeling about you too, but I can't explain it. It wasn't sexual, but it felt as if our souls were interweaving." It's another corny line but this is how it felt and like I said at the beginning, this is a love story, a love story with an ending.

"How was that?" I ask.

"I was as light as a feather when it happened but when it passed, I could see how tiny my burden is." She laughs that beautiful laugh of hers and I can tell she is just teasing me.

"Death doesn't seem quite as romantic after you die," I tell her.

"No one but God can live forever, I guess." She smiles almost regretfully. *"The President's daily address is about to begin."*

Kleopatra picks up a remote from the bedside table and flicks the television on. Her eyes hopefully observe my boss, who she has met once before, but he remains motionless.

After a commercial for cancer featuring an elderly man with a strikingly deep voice, the President appears. He is dressed in black, a colour that he sometimes uses to denote the fact that he is going to be talking about something serious.

"I am nothing but a listener," the President says resignedly.

“My ideas are not a manifestation of my own talent but a symptom of the world around me,” he ventures again, ever so hesitantly.

“The world woke my heart when I heard about the accident today in the subway, in which two brains – trains, should I say – collided...” he pauses for theatrical effect (there are rumours that the President attended drama school) *“... but then I was told that nobody on either train died!”* he exclaims happily.

“Thank the heavens, I thought to myself, but then I wondered whether the heavens would be so exultant: the population of heaven, if it exists, surely depends on people dying. If no one died, heaven would be infertile,” he speculates thoughtfully.

“Then I thought about all the animals, spirits and even bacteria that have consciousness. I realised that if every creature heeds God’s call to accept that a day will fall when all those great and all those small shall crawl in thrall to heaven’s storm in lines they formed, well, I guess it wouldn’t be Planet Earth. After composing this futile poem, I realised I had made my mind up. As of early next year, we will build a plant in which microorganisms feed and die. Since we now know microorganisms have consciousness, we can venture the guess that some of their souls will ascend to heaven. Believe you me, friends, I already have some ethical qualms about this

endeavour so we shall have a debate on it in two weeks' time. God night and Good bless!" he proclaims.

The camera zooms out and the television starts to play a documentary about Abraham Lincoln, one of my old fixations, but I don't care. I'm fuming inside. I'll watch it on catch-up. I want to talk for a bit & then have angry sex. I shake my head and K flicks the television off.

"I don't like anything about what the President said," I say, *"The micro-organism factory was Rockland's idea. Did you tell anyone?"*

"No. Why would I tell anyone? Besides, he said they wanted to build a plant. A plant isn't a factory," K responds, almost defensively.

"They're almost synonyms," I tell her.

"Great minds think alike" she says, challengingly.

I shoot her a look that says everything I can't be bothered to say and, crestfallen, it dawns on me that there is absolutely nowhere to have angry sex in a hospital.

"I feel like a cigarette," I say.

"I feel like a cigarette," my boss parrots me in his sleep. *"A ciggy - fan-fucking-tastic!"* He rolls over and starts to snore loudly.

"That'll probably be it from him for a while. I bought some cigarettes because I thought you might want one." Kleopatra hands me a cigarette. Smoking is against the rules in

hospital, but most people feel that 'guideline' to be ambiguous in its wording [*'you may smoke a cigarette outside'*]. I put the cigarette in my mouth and K lights it. I inhale deeply and exhale happily, breathing a satisfied sigh.

"Thanks," I say. "By the way, I realised that the micro-organism factory was a bad idea the second the President spoke it."

"A remarkable coincidence. Why is that?"

"The actions of each organism are a product of circumstance. It is the events that happen before and after our birth that determine our character and actions. Though understanding of cause and effect is instinctive, only when you gain self-consciousness are you truly responsible for what you do. Even then, your destiny is already preordained because as there are so many versions of infinity it is impossibly likely that there are people who look exactly like us with the exact same history as us having this conversation right now."

"So?" K says.

"You are not me, but if I were you, I'd be you. Heaven is a lottery," I tell her.

"That sounds more like an opinion than a fact."

"That's because it is," I continue. "I am not my opinions, but I accept that my opinions are a direct consequence of the events that happened before and after my birth."

"Of course. I think that was the

President's point. The causation of everything was the Great Beginning and everything that follows it is a result of the patterns in its formation."

The President said nothing of the sort, but this is a good point, so I nod. *"I just don't think those micro-organisms would have enough free will to determine their spiritual destinations. Besides, I expect I have killed millions, if not billions, of tiny creatures throughout my existence. Does that make me a bad person? To hell with it. There's no hell and there might not be a heaven."*

"Don't speak about that here," K says sternly. *"Someone might come in."*

I often anger K, sometimes on purpose, for doing and saying things that most people might find deranged or unacceptable, and today is a day that I want to enrage K, because there is absolutely nowhere to have angry sex in a hospital.

"What, chutney? Chutney makes a man like me happy. We can speak about that here," my boss says reassuringly.

"I forgot to tell you – your boss is on a drug that makes him want to speak in his sleep," K informs me.

"Put a ring on it, baby – pesticide!" he says. My boss' playful instruction, obviously directed towards K, brings me back to reality.

"Shouldn't we call a nurse?" I wonder.

"I am a nurse," K responds.

By ancient standards K is a nurse but I do not think she is qualified to deal with every medical situation.

“*Shouldn’t we call a nurse?*” I wonder, again.

K reluctantly presses the button that summons a nurse who changes the course of my career forever (irreversibly, just like that, forever).

Truthfully, I have never been physically attracted to nurses. This may be because I don’t like hospitals: I have always had an aversion towards the medical profession’s clinical practice. But that is a discourse best saved for another book, one which I would take no joy in writing and so which shall never see the light of day.

A nurse called Isabella enters the room a short second after K presses the button. Isabella nods at K and then at me. Her voice is soft yet confrontational.

“*I read your medical notes,*” she says, addressing me but looking out the window distractedly.

I do not know what to say to this, so I say nothing.

“*A page turner?*” K says feistily.

Isabella eyes K sulkily and then turns back to me.

“Not exactly. There was only one page. Did you know that you were an IVF baby?”
Isabella asks.

I say nothing. I didn't know that I was an IVF baby. I don't know what to think.

“I was an IVF baby, too...” Isabella says, as if to make me feel better about the fact.

Great, I think, I am in good company. I shrug, bewildered by this new knowledge.

“Good to know, I guess,” I say.

“Being an IVF baby means that you were wanted. Don't we all want to be wanted?”

“Sure,” I say.

“I'll tell you one thing – this life is a page turner,” Isabella says resolutely.

“It depends on who you are. Being a micro-organism means you don't get to have an enjoyable time,” I say.

I know that the nurse watched the President's address, because it is protocol that all those with jobs watch him speak.

“Are you a micro-organism?” Isabella asks, sarcasm glued to every syllable like a badly constructed model aeroplane. *“Besides, everyone is the same at birth.”*

This shakes me. Suddenly I wonder if everyone can hear what I say. The man who wrote 'Bird Volcano Event', who is me, also has songs called 'God Knows Your Burden' and 'You Are What You Think'. It is paranoid, but I wonder if people are listening to me think.

"I don't care what you say; this life is a page-turner," my boss adds helpfully.

"He will regain consciousness in less than two minutes. People on that drug say, 'I don't care what you say' when they are about to become conscious," Isabella informs us, even more helpfully.

"Really?" K asks, spite permeating her voice for no apparent reason.

"Have we met before? I didn't warm to you immediately because I felt like I have encountered you before..." Isabella trails off.

"I don't know and frankly I don't care," K states.

At this, part of me wonders with K is jealous of the nurse, who thinking about would be rather attractive if we were somewhere else and she was dressed differently.

"Touché," Isabella says.

"May we leave?" I ask.

"Sure; I thought you might want to remain here until Dave wakes up." It is weird hearing his name. I never think of him as Dave; I always think of him as my boss.

"Hey presto! Cominatcha' like a bearded beaver on a bad beard day," my boss quietly shouts.

"Hooray!" K exclaims. "Dramatic like magic."

"I thought it was you. I always knew you were here," says my boss.

“Yes. I suppose you can remember me from ACJD?” K asks quite keenly, like a fan addressing a pop star.

“That sounds about right. About then. Yeah, that was nice.”

“You featured in my diary.” K almost audibly blushes.

At this, part of me begins to feel jealous of my boss, who thinking about it could be rather attractive if we were somewhere else and if he were dressed differently.

“I’m flattered; fuck small talk. How did you describe me?” My boss itches at his nose.

“A man that would be rather attractive if he were dressed differently,” K says.

I trip out. I wonder if I died and everyone became me. The astute reader and dumbass alike will notice that something strange is going on. I think of *“take what you have gathered from coincidence”*, a Bob Dylan line that I wanted to have tattooed on my average sized hands but was advised by those close to me not to [I still aspired to become a subway driver, then, and they said it wouldn’t reflect well on me (and my ‘kind nature’, as one relative put it)].

A good writer should be a master of dialogue, but alas, I am not, for even I would admit I am not the smartest one in the universe, nor the second, nor the third, and so on and so on to an almost infinite number. This dialogue is happening fast, and my mind

is working slow, so I apologise to the dumbass who has by now forgotten where we are, and I apologise to the astute reader whose time is more valuable than a dime a second.

"If that's who I am to you, so be it," my boss says.

"Sorry to interrupt, but can I get you three coffees? This is by far the longest scene in the book, and the longer the better," Isabella says, winking at K.

"I'm okay, thank you," K says.

"Me two," my boss replies.

"No. Funny, two trains colliding; you couldn't make it up," I say.

"I wonder why the President didn't even apologise. This place is pretty dysfunctional," my boss says, expert on engineering that he is. My boss was unconscious for the President's speech. I get worried. I hazard the guess that my mind cannot work fast enough to create the surrounding. I hazard the guess this might be a simulation, like I read about in a trashy magazine.

"I wonder," Isabella says wistfully.

"Do they read this heaven?" K asks to no one in particular.

A cat appears out of nowhere and sits on K's lap.

"I... I don't know," says the cat who appeared out of nowhere. *"We are on Planet Earth."*

"I know," K says. She does not like to be reminded of the obvious.

The cat licks her lips. *"Once you're on Planet Earth, you cannot return to where you came from. But this doesn't make me too sad, because some might say it is paradise itself. It could not function without its flaws, for Planet Earth is perfect because it is imperfect. It is a place filled with anger and lust, for at some point in everyone's life they learn they can never escape. When we bleed, we bleed cacophonical colours. When we cry, we cry tears of fury."*

"Who are you?" I ask, bewildered.

"I am Cat," says Cat.

She looks straight into my eyes & purrs.

If you're looking for a meaning, you're in the wrong place. I'm just writing down what happened to me. How naïve I was when I began writing this story. How bitter I have become as the end approaches.

If you want to know the facts, I didn't go home with K after the hospital. She left with my boss. I suppose there is a reason that he is my boss, but I don't mean to make light of it. I still remember Xinx very fondly. The Cat became my friend and came home with me. We talk, but she gets bored of me easily, for I am not as intelligent as she is, and some might consider me a dull person.

"Are we bacteria inside an organism?" I ask Cat.

Cat opens and closes her mouth to indicate that she is not sure.

"I don't mind if we are," I say.

Cat shakes her head.

"I'm sorry," she says.

"What for?"

"I. I don't know."

"Well, if you're sorry, then I'm sorry, too."

Thousands of light years away a giant red man dies.

"I had to do it," says Cat.

"I know, Cat, I know."

"I miss my mother – the smell of her – her movements so graceful I cannot completely replicate them in my memory."

"Yes. I miss my mother too. Still, we might see our mothers again."

"I suppose. I suppose so," Cat says.

She shakes her head. I feel like asking her whether this means we are not going to heaven, but I decide against it. She reads my mind, though I have learnt that she was exaggerating the truth when she said she was God.

"You'll have to wait and see," Cat says.

"Yes, I guess I'll have to wait and see."

"May I have some tuna?"

the inauguration of insanity

She licks her lips and this story ends and the rest is a version of infinity. You couldn't make it up. Or you could make it up, but you'd have to be kind of mad.

THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
THE MOTHER OF INFINITY

CHAPTER 4:
INFORMATION ABOUT XINX FROM
THE CAT

I am writing a song on my laptop and Cat arrives, sitting down on the keys. She smells like she has just had sex.

"I have an announcement," Cat speculates.

"Great. Is it about our spiritual fate?" I ask, hopefully.

"I would consider my announcement to be of a more carnal nature," she responds.

"Oh. Is it about your carnal fate?"

"No. My announcement pertains to your relationship with this 'Xinx' figure," Cat says.

"Cat, spit it out!"

Cat spits semen onto the selectors of my laptop.

"Shit, Cat!"

Thankfully she doesn't. But she purrs with an almost satanic, seductive satisfaction, as if she has just rid something ugly beyond all meaning or comprehension.

"Xinx may be easier to reach than you might imagine," she says. *"You just need to remember her. Your last memory of her, for example."*

“Her decapitation?”

“Well, yes. See her whole, now. Replay the moment.”

“Well?”

“If my calculations are correct, there is someone just like you were in mind and body experiencing that very scene right now,” Cat says.

“Wow, Cat. I didn’t think you believed in the multiverse.”

“No. I don’t,” she says. “But somewhere far away... incredibly far away... but somewhere physical we can reach... and long ago... and now... and in a few seconds...”

“Okay. That’s what I told K at the hospital. So what?” I ask.

“I don’t know. I just thought it might be a relevant fact to convey before the announcement.”

“I thought that was the announcement.”

“No. The announcement is this: your programming of the oversoul means that you can summon Xinx whenever you want,” Cat says.

“What?!”

“K designed it thusly; don’t ask me why.”

“What? How do you know this?”

“My programming as a technophobe allows me to analyse the wirings of this dimension,” Cat says. “All you need to do is call K and ask her how to summon Xinx.”

“She was withholding it from me this

whole time? I thought that was the point of coming to Earth in the first place."

"Heh. Women have a lot of information they withhold from men. Maybe she desires you," Cat says.

The doorbell rings. Feeling small, I put my laptop to rest on the desk, mutter a white lie at the wall of the hall and open the door.

It's Kleopatra.

"Love is so intimate," K says.

"K? What are you doing here? I thought you left with my boss."

"Maybe I did. Maybe I didn't. That was a trust test."

"Okay. Do you trust me? I want to find Xinx."

"About that. We can. But you must marry me first."

Cat appears out of nowhere on my shoulder. *"Hah!"* Cat says, *"I read your mind, K. Now I know how to summon Xinx."*

"Oh? You do?" K asks sneeringly, as if particularly relishing the sarcastic aspects of her role of (what I now have reason to regard as) 'the villain' in this blockbuster parable.

"Yep. Have you seen that show called A Female Detective Cat Finds the Missing Twat?" Cat asks.

"No. Why?" K says.

“At the end, the ginger cat says “You’re busted! I’m the main woman around here!” and then she struts around.”

“So... so what?”

“You’re busted! I’m the main woman around here!” Cat jubilantly struts around. Although she often acts like a grown-up, I’ve learnt Cat is four to five years old and sometimes this is obvious.

“So, how do we find Xinx?” I ask.

“I have an idea. Get K to give you a hand-job. I have a feeling that K thrives off sexual energy.” Cat salsas around the hall as if she has just solved the mystery of all mysteries. She blinks. *“Don’t worry about it. I have a funny habit of disappearing into thin-air, but God almighty will be the witness to such shenanigans.”*

“Well...” I say, think for a second then think better of thinking further. *“Let’s go to bed, then.”*

I think K hears the reluctance in my voice, but she is so intensely attractive that there is a sharp tint of longing to my tone. I haven’t told you what she is wearing, because to be frank, she is not wearing much: a blue t-shirt, no bra, and denim shorts.

“Bed,” she states simply.

We go to my room. I’d been sleeping on the sofa. I have a habit of sleeping on sofas when I’m feeling particularly alone and a habit of sleeping on beds when I’m in company. I sit

on the bed.

"I am an empress and you are my benefactor."

"Okay."

"House, I want to hear The Eerie Shakers sing 'Today I Am A Woman.'" Kleopatra nods at me. "Say it."

"Say what?"

"Say it," she insists.

"It," I say.

"Do you desire me?"

"Yeah."

"More than Xinx?"

"I can't really compare... I mean you're two different beings."

"But it's like the choice between Vegan Pizza or Special Stir-Fried Rice. Surely, any sane man would pick Special Stir-Fried Rice."

"No, I'm nearly vegan. Tease me. Say it's Vegan Special Fried Rice."

"Okay. It's Vegan Special Fried Rice."

She turns her back on me. I look at her bottom. It's grossly rotund. She's gained weight. Shit, though. I want to feel it. I drool slightly.

"I want you to seduce me like you seduce yourself, even though you're latently straight. I don't want you to arouse yourself and have my worst suspicions confirmed."

"Men don't do that. That's what women are for..." I say, and she laughs.

"Oh? But I..."

She dances. I feel my love, remembering

what Cat said, and stimulate it for twenty seconds, drooling even more.

The music reaches a climax! The whole group sings in unison, "*For Today I Am A Woman! Trombones! Saxophones! Epiphanies! Einstein!*"

"Up?" K asks, as she was fond of doing.

"Yeah." I tell her what she already knows.

"Wanker," K eloquently chastises.

"Feel me."

"Sure."

She parks herself on my cock, denim pressing into it. She doesn't move a lot; she just sits there for thirty seconds. Then she dry humps me until she's wet and I climax.

"Ah," I say.

The Television turns on, as we have programmed it to do a minute after our climaxes. Cat races into the room, twitching excitedly.

"*It's happening! It's happening!*" Cat exclaims.

"*A billion immigrants have been forced to evacuate the region and are now assumed dead,*" the President states solemnly.

"*What? But a billion immigrants don't even live here...*" K says, annoyed.

"*This is a senseless crime and we'll prosecute the responsible party,*" the President continues.

"I am a female feminist scientist and I think I know who is responsible," Cat says.

"I don't see what that's got to do with... oh..." I say.

"Anyways, I changed the programming of our Universe! That means that Xinx is just four hundred words down the road," Cat says.

"Hooray!" I say.

"Whoop-de-doo," K says.

"Wait? What do you mean four hundred words down the road?" I ask.

"Didn't you know? I believe we are characters in a play for the almighty," Cat says.

"I thought you were the almighty," I respond.

"Not exactly. The almighty is all-seeing and all-knowing. K, you are just a mere imposter. Your day of reckoning will come. I hope my final judgement is fair," Cat says.

"But I thought you weren't God," I say, confused.

"Allah yaghfir lak," Cat says.

"Boohoo," K says. *"So this means we'll see Xinx in 300 words?"*

"Yes. But you can summon her at any time," says Cat.

"Allah yrja aistuhdir li 'afdal sidiyq w namudhaj aldhy yusamaa shaynakas,"
Kleopatra incants.

"I didn't know you..." I start, but then Xinx appears, naked, a little younger than I remember her. Her bosoms already soothe me

with their homely, portly nature... I don't mean to obsess over them already, but this book is fantasy-erotica-romance, isn't it?

"Welcome!" Xinx says.

"Hello!" I exclaim.

"Where are we? What I am I welcoming you to today?" Xinx says, confusedly.

"Hi Xinx! I've heard so much about you!"

Cat says, exultantly.

"Welcome!" Xinx says. *"What have you heard about me?"*

"Mostly I've heard your ex go on about your... uh... motherly nature."

"I don't like Freud. Please don't speak about Freud," I beg.

"That's not what the implication was," K says.

"K! Welcome!" Xinx says, letting old rivalries die.

"Why are you naked?" I say.

"Isn't it natural? You barbarians still wear clothes? I thought it was outlawed."

"As a suffragette, I have to say I agree," says Cat.

"I am half-naked and vaguely covered with your boyfriend's semen," K says.

"Oh. Sorry, Xinx, I meant to say... after we broke up, I had sex with K..." I say, "a lot."

"You mean after I was decapitated?"

Xinx asks.

"Yeah. That."

"It didn't happen instantly, nor overnight," says K.

"I understand the implications of that statement," says Xinx.

"Oh! Shit! Shit! Shit! Everyone shut up," implores Cat, clawing at the carpet.

"Why?" K asks.

"Shut up!" orders Cat.

No one says a thing for a minute. The house remains as it is. There is a palpable tension in the room. Xinx looks aggressively at K, who strips to her bare bones. K looks back at her as if there is going to be a standoff.

There is a loud bang, steam and out of nowhere appears another Xinx, also naked! They both look identical.

"Shit. Shit. Shit. I foresaw this, too," Cat says.

"Which one is the original Xinx?" I wonder.

"I am," both Xinxs say at once.

"Shit! Let's murder one of these motherfuckers!" K says.

"No, no, no!" says Cat.

The Xinx turn to each other.

"Oh," say the Xinx.

"Do you have to mirror each other's movements?" I ask.

Cat winks, licks her lips and says, *"Four girls, one guitarist!"*

"Oh... I, what do you think of this?" says one.

"Who, me?" says the other.

"No, I," says one.

"Well, I'm naked, too," Cat informs me.

"Let's find out who really owns your love."

"He belongs to me!" say both Xinx in unison.

"I did notice something. One Xinx is a little skinnier than the other," I say.

"Who? Me? No, me!" say the Xinx.

"We're going round in circles here." Cat chases her tail animatedly.

I point at one Xinx. *"That must mean the other one is fatter, meaning she is the younger one!"* I say.

"That doesn't mean a thing! Breed with all three of these women and be done with it!" Cat jumps on the bed, closes her eyes and sulks under the blanket, or at least that's what I believe she is doing.

"Let's put pink hair dye on the Xinx the Youngerer," says K.

"Where are we going to get pink hair dye?"

K shrugs.

"I don't want pink hair!" says Xinx The Youngerer.

K shrugs. *"Red then?"*

"Wow. Blue, black & red is my favourite combination of colours, given there is three," I confess.

"What about two?" Xinx The Youngerer asks.

"Your colour," I say.

"But I'm only one colour," Xinx The Youngerer says.

"Yeah," I say. "But blue & black aren't named when they're together like that."

"I find that quite offensive. It's called Azurack. I tell you this every time I..." Xinx The Elderer says.

"That's it. We're dyeing you red," says K.

"I'm dying me unless this book is black & white & read all over, in which case I'll die a celebrated writer," I say.

"I don't mind being read," says Xinx The Elderer:

"That settles it then." K clicks her fingers and Xinx The Elder's long, parrot blue, shoulder length hair turns into a natural-looking crimson.

Cat emerges out of the bedding, inspecting Xinx The Elder elatedly. "Xinx, your hair is inspirational. As a feminist, having the courage to dye your hair is paramount. But you look great. You don't look a fool!"

"Thanks, Cat." Xinx The Elderer smiles.

"First it happened to me and now it's going to happen to you," Cat sighs, factually.

"What?" K asks.

"Whatever it is, it doesn't sound all that good," I say.

"Another apocalypse?" Xinx The Youngerer speculates.

“No, the apocalypse has already happened,” Xinx The Elderer reasons.

“I can’t say for sure,” says Cat. “But beyond reasonable doubt, I can say that one of you will be punished and everyone will laugh at you.”

“Cat! How could you possibly know this?” I ask.

“I don’t know. I’ve just got a feeling in my gut telling me that today is the last good day we’ll see for a while and we should appreciate it.”

“Cat?” Kleopatra says disbelievingly. “Are you damning us? Why are you here in the first place?”

“I thought my mission here had something to do with Xinx, but you seemed to take care of that quickly. And now we have two. So?”

“So? What do you mean so? I was working on getting one Xinx here for I,” K says.

“I don’t care for your Rastafarian lies. Allah tathir hadhih alghurfa!” Cat looks as infuriated as it’s possible for a cat to look.

“No, I meaning the main character in this book,” K explains.

“Like that Otis Redding song my boyfriend wants to show me when the neighbours next put it on, about a man and a man?” Cat asks, distrustful.

“Kind of, but not really,” I elaborate.

“My boyfriend is an angel in some ways, but I too mean the main guy in this book,” Cat says. *“This universe is simply a constant loop of the bible. You haven’t self-actualised enough to alter it. The main character, I, that is you, I, must get to heaven, which is nothing, and then you will have completed all your trials and can rest for the rest of forever, which will mean nothing, not that you’re there to experience it. Then it will all happen again! It’s the ‘eternal return’ paradox that you discussed during the mid-section of the novella, which may soon be classified as a novel!”* Cat laughs at me.

“Hah. Hah. Hah. Hah. You were only joking, Cat, but for some time I thought we were actually characters in the Bible. Hah. Hah. Hah.” I fiddle with my thumbs.

“I’d prefer to avoid discussion of your prophecy, Cat,” Xinx The Youngerer says, gazing self-pityingly at her fingernails in the way that Rockland, once secret hero of these pages and now completely irrelevant to the plot of the story, was occasionally wont to do.

“There is no prophecy,” Cat explains. *“It’s a warning about something inevitable that will happen to one of you! And so, I bid you heathens adieu with one final thought: as feminist as I am, don’t you think I has such potential as a lover?”*

“Who? Me?” I ask, “*I meaning me?*”

“Yeah!” Cat looks at me merrily. “*I is not Rastafarian, is I?*”

“*Its longevity... the way that you say stuff... it's so humane... it's so hot,*” say The Xinx (finishing each other sentences).

Maybe The Xinx weren't finishing each other's sentences and in fact were just saying different things.

“*Have I something else to tell you, I,*” says Cat.

“*Oh?*”

Now I know ‘I’ is me, unless Cat is as brain damaged as Yoda... or pretending to be a pirate and asking a question only to answer it.

“*You sure do look good today.*” Cat walks on one spot as if she is desperate to get going somewhere important.

“*Really? We may have to evict you,*” I say, unreasonably.

“*What? I was just saying how... extraordinary you look today.*”

“*Yes, I, you look beautiful,*” says Xinx The Elderer.

“*Yet... phlegmatic,*” Xinx The Younger continues.

“*I want to murder some microorganisms in your groins,*” K confesses.

“*Err...*” I say, for everyone has lost their minds and become their bodies.

“*Meow,*” says Cat. She licks and then she vanishes, just like that, irreversibly, forever.

There is a silence and not a word is said until the police arrive twenty minutes later. I am not going to describe the scene that unfolds in the next ten minutes but leave it to the reader's imagination. The following words, in any order, can be applied to describe what happens: excruciating, orgiastic, premature, three tips of tongues, grotesque, manual labour and I-ching. But then several squads of secret servicemen arrive at our door, led by a Ginger Cat, as prophesied by Cat, who I may have been too harsh on.

"You're busted! I'm the main woman around here!" the Ginger Cat says and struts around manically.

**THE INAUGURATION OF INSANITY:
THE MOTHER OF INFINITY**

**CHAPTER 5:
THE CRUCIFIXION**

I can't help but think to myself as I get crucified that things would be very different if the judge felt himself judged for his own crimes against God, who I was in effect representing. I sniff. Penal punishment is less of a wink than a colossal nudge off a cliff. I can't hold a grudge for the rest of my life, for I don't have the necessary manpower on the cross to recruit a gang to tend to my 'grudge', even if I have referred to the mafia in this book. It all seems unnecessary, now, the traversing of the multiverse: the real Xinx, according to the doctrine of Cat, achieved her life purpose of ascension to heaven as soon as she was decapitated. My crucifixion, as Cat predicted and as I have read about, is not a solitary affair. No, dozens of people, including the President, throw halloumi at me and I stay pinned to the cross until I die. As I stand there, getting stoned by halloumi, I ponder simulation theory, whether I personally have any individually generated thought, Rockland's revelries, Xinx's private parts and whether we are just characters in *A Female Detective Cat Finds The Missing Twat*.

Although this is a love story (a love

story with an ending), Cat's confirmation of the truth of Nietzsche's eternal return theory means that in an eternity's eternity's time, this may still be the story's ending and beginning. I was happy, though tearful, in love with a cold and climaxed inside a being who was infinite because of her soul, then a catastrophe took her from the world that I believe was my original birthplace, and then I spent more than two lifetimes living with a sexy yet somehow soulless being who was able to bargain with a deity that I am no longer certain exists.

Yes, as I slowly die, getting stoned by halloumi, I wonder whether I am just like Rockland: persistently pursuing something that has either already happened or will never happen at all, reading so deeply between the lines that he is capable of making himself believe that there is a great coding to the position of each syllable, some kind of secret tantric message. Maybe, after all, I am the physical embodiment of egocentric solipsism, myself.

Would I do it all again if I had a choice in the matter? Would I accept the bargain of eternal return and be done with it? Of course. I would. And if that means going to hell for eternity, so be it. At the very least, my penis will be in heaven for a large minority of eternity's eternity's duration... you know, in the grand scheme of things the fact that I might be going to hell doesn't grieve me –

each being is one in a billion trillion. I know a couple of people I don't mind the company of whom are going to hell for sure, too.

No one but God can live forever, I guess. Perhaps I am insane, inside a sane organism, and this primitive device that translates my thoughts into text is simply an illusion constructed my schizophrenic mind.

The Mother of Infinity lick my lips & I pass out & this story ends & the rest is a version of eternity. You couldn't make it up. Or you could make it up, but you'd have to be kind of stoned.