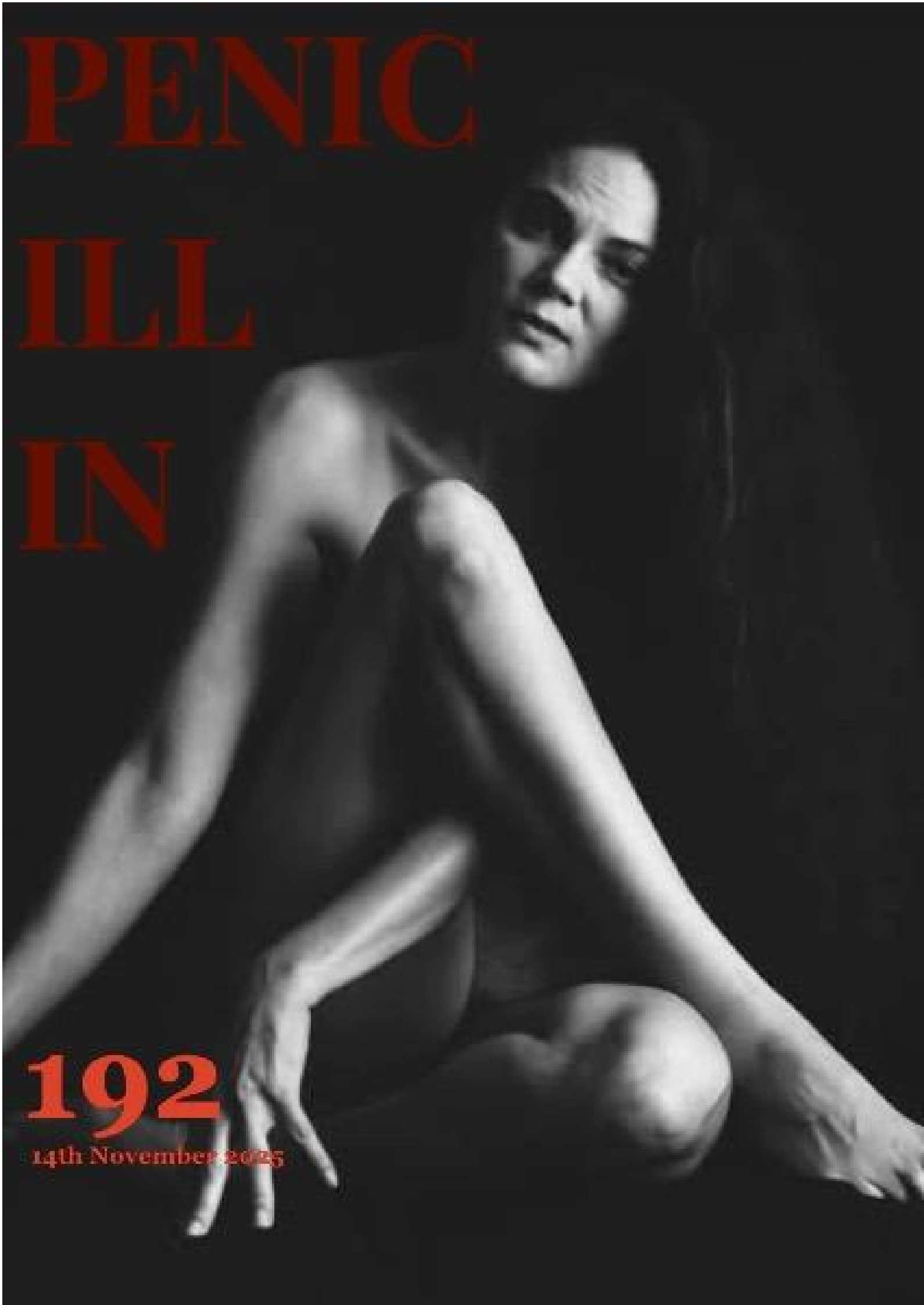


PENIC ILL IN



192

14th November 2025

THE MEAT MACHINE



By David Playfair

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Chapter Thirty-six—I Report to Stalin

So of all our expedition east, only Harry and I made it as far as Moscow. We had left Genghis's partisans behind the German lines, our drowned comrades in the river-flow, and our live comrades — Zaretsky, Blum and the women — in Rostov's army. While the surviving children went their separate way to a far-off institution. There would be reunions after the war, but right now everyone had been scattered across the landscape. One great work, of repelling the Nazis, submerged all individual desires and destinies.

In the early morning an army truck dropped us off by Sedna's apartment block. I should have telephoned ahead, but all I could think of was getting back to a secure corner of my world. And Sedna was there, she hadn't evacuated. I knocked at her apartment door as I'd done a hundred times before. She ran out in her dressing gown and folded her short strong arms around my waist. I buried my face in her long hair, and breathed in the new-baked-bread fragrance of a woman who has just climbed out of bed. Still embraced, we walked into the small living room, Harry following with our weapons and baggage slung on his back.

'This is my friend and blood-brother Harry,' I said. 'We've been through the wars. We have to sleep. It's so good to be here again.'

Sedna shook hands with Harry, kissed me again, and said: 'You can't go to sleep yet, Ivan. There are orders left for you. They knew you'd come here first.' And she handed me an official envelope.

To Major Kublev, it read, IMMEDIATELY on arriving in Moscow you are to report to MGB headquarters for debriefing. Transport will be provided upon telephone request.

'Here we go again,' said Sedna, with a tired smile. 'I hope at least you'll stay long enough to shave. And I've got your spare uniform in the closet.'

'You know I want to be with you, Sedna. This'll just be a quick debriefing. The sooner I go the sooner I'll be back.'

'Your shaving tackle's still on the bathroom shelf, Ivan. Do you know, I used to sniff the shaving soap when I got lonely? I've so missed having you around. You were gone for a whole year. Don't leave so long again.'

'Don't intend to,' I said from the corner of my mouth as I scraped away the whiskers. 'Soon as I'm debriefed I'll be right back. Shouldn't take more than a couple of hours. Would you phone for the car? The number's on that letter.'

A shiny black car drew up to the building after only fifteen minutes. I hugged Sedna again.

'Look after Harry,' I said. 'He's suffering from a broken heart.'

I hurried down. Harry followed, carrying the same battered pack of heavy canvas which he'd lugged for days through fire and water. It held the robot tank's brain and the German coding machine. The police chauffeur helped him load this into the boot.

'Give these magic machines to your wizards,' said Harry. 'That's what Huldah wanted.'

He went back upstairs to await my return.

It was Beria's colleague Merkulov who took over the secret machines and heard my information about German communists and Nazi battle order. While I'd been away, Beria had been transferred from MGB (that is, State Security) to the less influential MVD (Internal Affairs). Remembering Natalia's secret warning against the man, I supposed this was a good thing.

Further debriefing had to come from Stalin himself. Another sleek limousine scooped me up to Stalin's country cottage, a simple place such as prosperous farmers might keep for a hunting lodge. Even the security officers' guardhouse on the approach road was bigger.

This was Stalin's real home, where he'd fled in the black days of 1941, and where he was to die ten years later.

A guard opened the door, and there was Stalin, still looking just like himself, a rough-complexioned stocky Georgian in a soldier's tunic, with no title besides 'Secretary of the Communist Party'. What other rank would he need? His every suggestion carried the strength of an order.

'Well, come in comrade, don't stay by the door...'

That was Stalin, talking to me. I realized I'd stood unmoving, for the last minute, just looking at the man. And that he'd been doing the same to me. He took his pipe from his mouth with his left hand, and put out his right hand.

As we clasped hands, I understood, that I still liked the man, that I would always feel a loyalty to him. Every Soviet citizen had a workmate or a cousin who'd been cruelly treated by Stalin's harsh rules. Yet they staunchly worked in the giant factories of his five-year plans. They rode to war in tanks bearing the painted slogan 'For Stalin!'. When we'd overthrown our capitalists, we'd challenged the world. Now the world was coming back at us. We were scared, and we needed a leader who wasn't. His stolid equanimity gave me the same relief as a child lost at the zoo feels on being reclaimed by a stern parent. Does that sound abject? Perhaps it does, but I'm telling this story the way things were.

I saw that he wasn't alone. The man sitting opposite, in an elegant suit with a silk tie, was Dimitrov. He looked haggard, older than his newspaper pictures.

I suppose we all looked haggard and older in those days. Dimitrov was a Bulgarian, leader of the Third Communist International organization, Comintern for short. A very clever man — he had been in Berlin in 1933 and the Nazis made the blunder of putting him on trial.

He conducted his own defense, ran rings around Göring during the cross-examination, and forced an acquittal. From then on the Nazis simply imprisoned Communists with no opportunity to open their mouths in court.

We sat, and the inevitable tea was poured, and Stalin spoke.

'You have a report for me, Comrade. You talked to Hitler! I want to know every word he said. But first of all...' He stopped to tamp more tobacco in his pipe. 'First of all, though, I owe you an explanation. Or, should I say, an answer. An answer to the question you're too polite to ask.'

'Which question is that, Comrade Stalin?'

He hesitated. I didn't recognize his expression right away, because it wasn't one you'd expect to see on the face of a great dictator. He was embarrassed.

'Kublev, I did get your warning last year. I also got warning from my other spies. I had secret agents among the Ukrainian emigrés, also in Romania, Hungary, Finland and Japan. They all spoke of an invasion. Decent German soldiers deserted to us across the Polish frontier with the same story. Planes crashed with invasion maps. I knew, too, that Hitler had a history of attacking before his forces were fully ready — that's how he took Austria...'

'Then why...' I was too shaken by this revelation to remember my manners.

‘Why did I not alert the Red Army? Why did I decide the warnings were planted? Why did I assume the first shots were a false alarm? Why didn’t I order the Air Squadrons to scramble? That’s what you were going to ask, wasn’t it?’

‘Yes.’ What else could I say?

‘Then I’ll tell you, in one word. Or, rather, with one name. Churchill! He warned me too, and I let that spoil all the rest. You see, I’ve never forgotten how he tricked the US into the first world war, how his men loaded munitions on the Lusitania and then misdirected its captain into a U-boat pack. The Germans didn’t want to fight the Americans, yet he deceived them into provoking a new enemy. We had almost too much warning — I felt sure Churchill was up to his old games with us...’

He lit his pipe, puffed clouds of smoke, and grew calmer.

‘Churchill’s so crooked that you can’t even count on him to tell a lie. He did tell the truth that time, didn’t he? And so did you.’

‘Aren’t you forgetting something, Joe,’ said Dimitrov. ‘That the Soviet people had to be 100% sure as well. A woman won’t set fire to her house on a rumor.’

‘Perhaps.’

We drank more tea, in a silence that had become companionable.

‘Do you remember,’ asked Stalin, ‘the place of our last conversation?’

‘The Ekaterinsky Palace,’ I said. ‘The Amber Room.’

‘Well,’ went on Stalin, ‘The Nazis overran all that countryside west of Leningrad. And now we have taken it back again. The Palace was still standing. But the Amber Room was gone. Or rather, the bare room was still there but the amber was all stripped.’

He paused, and pointed his pipe stem at me.

‘Major, I liked that room. Did you have any clue as to where they put that amber?’

‘I do, Comrade Stalin, but I don’t think you’ll ever get it back.’ And I told him how the German engineers used amber as the strong resilient setting for the electronic brains of war machines. ‘By the time the Nazis are defeated, our amber will be scattered and exploded in tiny bits across every battlefield of Europe.’

‘At least,’ said Dimitrov, ‘the Nazis will also be scattered and exploded in tiny bits across every battlefield of Europe.’

And we all laughed, not in a very nice way.

‘All right then, Major Kublev, let’s hear about Reichsführer Adolf Hitler.’ Not knowing what would interest Stalin most, I simply told the whole story of my acquaintance with Hitler. How I’d first met him, and what he’d said about war, and sausages, and Jews. I described Hitler’s presence — the man’s personal magnetism — and his entourage.

Also I repeated Friedrich’s and von Bärffels’s stories of the early struggles. I told about my mission to research Hitler’s ancestry, and the Thule society.

‘A brilliant man,’ said Stalin. ‘And, as we know to our cost, unpredictable. Is there anything about him that we might rely on?’

‘Absolutely,’ I said. ‘We can rely on his enormous confidence and courage. He believes that his mission is protected by God, that he is a reincarnation of Frederick the Great. He believes that he cannot lose, no matter how bad the situation.’

‘So,’ said Stalin, ‘it must be war to the bitter end. Even if we inflict crushing defeats upon this man, he’ll still believe in a last-minute deliverance. The death of the Empress Elizabeth...’

(For those of you who aren’t history buffs, I should explain that this Russian Empress waged a successful war against King Frederick II’s Germans. On the day of her death the Russian army was almost up to Berlin. Her successor, Emperor Peter III, had exactly opposite ideas about foreign policy, and abruptly withdrew the Russian army. Berlin was reprieved.)

Stalin grinned. ‘Know that I’m in better health than Elizabeth!’ he announced. ‘Just in case anyone is thinking of doing a Peter III deal with Hitler.’

‘Don’t look at me, Joseph,’ said Dimitrov.

‘No, that would be more Beria’s style. A good thing I demoted him last year. Make sure everyone remembers what happened to Peter III afterwards.’

(In case you didn’t know, officers of the Imperial Guard strangled Peter III, respectfully and with a silken scarf, as befits a royal victim.)

Stalin turned to me.

‘Comrade, can you sum Hitler up in one sentence?’

I thought for a moment, then it came to me clearly.

‘He believes,’ I said, ‘that he cannot lose, and this means that he cannot win.’

‘Thank-you,’ said Stalin. ‘I couldn’t have asked for better news. Now I know I was right not to assassinate him. Now I know that the tide will turn. We will regain our lost lands, and more. We will see Communist governments in Poland and Germany.’

He made no move to dismiss me, so I dared to ask a question.

‘Can we hope for Hitler’s workers to revolt?’

Stalin thought about that while he cleaned and reloaded his pipe.

‘I expect a rebellion in Poland,’ he said, ‘but I don’t think it’ll come from the workers. Most of those have been drafted away to Germany for slave labor. It will be a nationalist rising led by the middle classes, as hostile to us as to the Nazis. Anything that kills Nazis is good news right now, but it could embarrass our cause if they’re too successful. You came via Smolensk. I suppose you know that we dealt with the Polish officer caste...’

‘I did see something of the kind...’

‘And now I wish I’d resisted the temptation. They were in our grasp, 4,000 members of the Polish ruling class... It seemed the obvious thing to do at the time. But now we’ve made it too easy for the Polish workers to disown us one day. We should have left the job for them. Terror can educate the terrorists as well as the terrorized — it stains the hands red, a token that there can be no going back.’

‘And the German workers?’ I asked.

‘Not enough of them are wholeheartedly disobedient. They seem unnaturally domesticated. That’s the hard lesson we’ve learned. Even now, when the German army’s ceased to make gains, they haven’t organized any mutinies. And they don’t have any Jews left to sabotage the war effort. The smart Jews ran off to the USA and the rest are bars of soap.’

‘What shall we do with the Germans then?’ asked Dimitrov.

I shuffled my feet, not sure whether I should remain any longer while high policy was being discussed. Stalin answered my unspoken question by refilling my glass of tea.

‘What shall we do with the Germans?’ repeated Stalin. ‘Comrades, what we will do with the Germans is simple. We’ll strip their economy bare. Once in Berlin the Red Army will get a free hand. Every soldier will send a 10-kilogram parcel back home every month, postage free. Colonels and generals may fill a railway wagon. The machines in every factory will be unbolted and freighted east. We seize the equipment of every hospital, we take every car and truck, every ship and plane. And we still won’t make up our losses...’

‘And the prisoners of war?’

‘They’ll be fed, enough to keep them working in Russian coal mines for the next ten years. The lucky ones, that is. Others will clear the mine fields they laid. The hard way. And while they’re so engaged, we’ll loot.’

He smiled, not in a kindly way.

I must have smiled too. Stalin didn’t miss a thing. He turned to Dimitrov.

‘You see Kublev’s face? That’s the look of a peasant when he hears the word “loot”. Don’t forget we’re fighting this war with peasant soldiers. Industrial proletarians, like you Georgi, make the guns and print the instructions, but the peasant conscripts risk their bodies. You can promote them,’ and he pointed to my shoulder-boards, ‘but if you scratch the surface they’re still peasants underneath. Am I right so far, Major?’

‘You’re right.’

Should I have resented being used as demonstration material for a lecture in history? I don’t think so, especially since this particular lecturer was so absolutely correct. Also it amused me to watch Dimitrov, the movement’s silver-tongued orator, being relegated to the listening role.

‘For as long as the Nemtsi are on the holy ground of Mother Russia, the peasants will fight without thought of reward. But once they cross the Bug they change.’

The Bug is the first river you cross after going into Poland from White Russia.

‘Yes,’ went on Stalin, ‘they change. They get nervous at the foreignness around them. They get homesick and don’t want to leave their bones among strangers. Only the prospect of loot will draw them willingly further.’

He turned toward me.

‘Our comrade Major Kublev has an aged father back on the land.’

True — how did he know?

‘Before the war the Major took a leave from his duties every August so he might go back to the farm and help bring the harvest home. Now Hitler’s world crisis has kept him too busy to do that. How do you feel about that?’

‘You must know, Comrade Stalin. It hurts,’ I said, ‘to think about it. The old man has arthritis in his hips, and his heart is weak. He shouldn’t have to lift up grain sacks. That’s young men’s work. My father doesn’t complain, but I know it’s bitter hard on him.’

Stalin turned back to Dimitrov. ‘Now one day the mailman brings that old man a ten-kilogram parcel. He opens it to find a can of lard, a packet of sugar cubes, four silk scarves, a silver teapot, a gold watch and a cuckoo-clock. That sweetens the bitterness a bit, for sender as well as receiver.’

Dimitrov threw up his hands in surrender. ‘Vae victis!’ he quoted.

A shadow came over Stalin’s face. ‘There’ll be no ten-kilogram parcel for me,’ he said. ‘Those swine murdered my son.’

Dimitrov gripped Stalin’s shoulder in condolence, and he regained his composure.

‘A Communist,’ said Stalin, ‘can best mourn a dead soldier by protecting those who still live. I want a parcel of a very special kind, which will stop the capitalists from ever invading us again. After we’ve won this war, I want a nuclear bomb, gift-wrapped in a space rocket.’

My jaw dropped. Stalin laughed.

‘Thought they were pure science-fiction, did you? Hitler doesn’t. I guess he didn’t confide everything to you. Other spies confirm that Nazis are gathering radioactive metals in Czechoslovakia, and heavy water in Norway. They’ll ask Heisenberg to put it together. And they’ve got an engineer, von Braun, started on the rocket missiles.’

‘Perhaps they will win at the last minute!’ I blurted out. ‘In the H.G. Wells story, a single one of those bombs destroyed a whole city. I supposed it was pure fantasy when I read it.’

Dimitrov laughed. ‘You’d forgotten, hadn’t you, that Wells also wrote a story, long before the first world war, describing tanks.’

‘What can save us, then?’

‘Soviet under-engineering,’ Stalin answered. ‘The antidote to German over-engineering. You’ve just come from combat. You’ve seen how often the Germans interrupt production to bring out new exciting tank designs, while we keep turning out the same old boring winner. Or how their submachine-guns jam on every speck of grit, while our crude under-engineered guns just spit that grit out with the bullets. To put it simply, I think the Germans are too perfectionist. I don’t think there’s an engineer in Europe who could finish their nuclear missile before our lads take Berlin.’

‘Joliot-Curie could do it. He’s got that French flair,’ said Dimitrov. ‘But he won’t, he’s one of us. The only bombs he’ll be making now will be Molotov cocktails. We’re safe from nuclear strike for the time being.’

‘That’s why,’ said Stalin, ‘I won’t let our scientists begin the Soviet counter-project yet. Kurchatov agreed to postpone his nuclear research, and we’ve got him working for the navy. And Ivanov’s working on the railways. But we had to arrest Korolëv to stop him from building space rockets. Once we’ve won the war we’ll turn those fellows loose. Maybe I’ll appoint Beria as project director. Think that will satisfy his ambitions?’

‘No,’ said Dimitrov. Stalin shrugged.

I still felt, and looked, horrified. Today's young people grew up with these bombs. Mine was the generation which had to get used to this metal beast, no bigger than a saloon car, which could kill a hundred thousand people in one second.

'We're not just sitting on our hands,' reassured Dimitrov. 'Our undercover people in the rocket project sabotage everything they can.'

'And the British are doing a decent job of bombing the installations,' added Stalin. 'Of course we'd sooner they used the resources to fight the Nazis on land, but they leave that chore to us.'

'Excuse me, Comrades,' I asked, 'but aren't these matters highly classified? I don't know if I've got security clearance.'

Stalin laughed. 'You do now. Your next mission is to the United States, to find out what they're doing about it.'

He turned to Dimitrov. 'Georgi, explain it to him.'

'The Americans are being surprisingly nice to us,' said Dimitrov. 'They've joined the war against the Germans, though they could have confined themselves to fighting the Japanese in the Pacific. They're sending us lots of fine stuff — trucks, boot-leather, meat. They didn't even press us for payment.'

'We did pay them, though,' said Stalin. 'Five tons of gold. I didn't like us to be obliged.'

Dimitrov laughed.

'Shall I ask him too, Joseph?'

Stalin nodded.

'Major, if you had to transport five tons of gold, packed in ninety-three separate wooden boxes, across the ocean from Russia to America, how would you order it?'

'That's not a new problem for a peasant,' I said. 'A wise man doesn't put all his eggs in one basket. Ninety-three boxes of gold need ninety-three separate ships.'

'So you wouldn't put all the gold on one single war ship, and then use that ship for escort duty en route?'

'Surely that's not what they did?'

'That's what they did,' said Stalin. 'They not only put all the golden eggs in one basket, they jostled that basket all around the marketplace afterwards. Didn't they know that the giant fish-demon Kunopaston lurks beneath the waves, greedy for gold?'

'There you go again,' said Dimitrov. 'You didn't waste your time at the seminary.' They chuckled.

'To be exact,' said Dimitrov, 'the United States government requested the British Navy to carry the gold. The whole mass was loaded onto His Majesty's cruiser *Edinburgh*, which then left Murmansk on slow convoy duty. The German navy attacked the convoy. Captain Faulkner of the *Edinburgh* chose to stay and fight rather than run on past. A decent man, he valued merchant sailors' lives higher than gold, higher than his own freight-commission. The *Edinburgh* was torpedoed and sunk.'

'Did he sign a receipt before he left port?' I asked.

Dimitrov laughed. ‘Comrade Major, you are indeed a true peasant. An excellent question, and the answer is Yes. We have paid our bills. Our creditors can’t blame us if their own delivery service is faulty.’

‘Despite this disappointment, the Americans continue to supply us,’ said Stalin.

‘Why would capitalists be so generous?’ he asked.

‘I suppose,’ I answered, ‘that they wish to dominate Europe, that this will be easier if Germany and the Soviet Union exhaust each other first, and they would support whichever side was losing.’

‘That’s what we thought,’ said Dimitrov, ‘last year. But we’re starting to win now, and still they help us.’

‘Do you think there’s a catch?’

‘We know there’s a catch. We just don’t know what it is. They’re up to something, Major. Something so big that they have no worries about winning the war, something so powerful that they can afford to be as generous as they like.’

‘Something big and powerful. . . Might even be an atom bomb wrapped in a B-29 Flying Fortress,’ said Stalin. ‘We will send you to the USA to sniff it out. But first you must become familiar with the scent. Go and talk to Kurchatov.’

‘About the mighty atom,’ said Dimitrov.

‘That’s a bit of a cliché,’ said Stalin, ‘and coming from our great orator too.’

‘I’m a printer by trade,’ said Dimitrov, ‘so I’m allowed to use clichés.’

I took my leave.

And to the USA it was, later that year. But that’s another story, which I won’t tell now. Except to explain why I didn’t get back to my friends Sedna and Harry that evening. Life with dictators has been described as *wait and hurry-up*. Stalin had taken months — years maybe — to deliberate over nuclear weaponry. Having now decided to go ahead right after victory in Europe, he wanted to begin preparations at once. For the second time in my career Stalin’s guards sped me to the airport for a night flight. Destination?

Archangelsk near the White Sea, to get briefed by Professor Kurchatov. This flight north, to my great relief, was boring. The radio worked perfectly. Not a single bullet was fired at our plane, neither by the Finns nor by our own people. We landed safely in the pearly gleam of the midnight sun.

NEXT WEEK—Chapter Thirty-seven—Archangelsk

THE **MEAT**
MACHINE

VITAL
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DAVID PLAYFAIR

ASTRO, THE MASTER OF MYSTERIES

(1912)



By Gelett Burgess
Reviewed by D4Doom

Astro, the Master of Mysteries is another entry in the occult detective genre and it's another example of the surprising flexibility of that genre. It offers its own distinctive variation on the basic theme. Gelett Burgess wrote the stories that comprise this collection some time before 1912 when they were first published in book form. They're free-standing stories but there is a longer story arc as well, which is a fairly unusual feature for a collection of detective stories.

Astro is an astrologer, palm-reader, fortune-teller and psychic. He's also a complete charlatan. You might think this would make him either a villain or at best a loveable rogue but in fact he's very much the hero. You see, despite being a charlatan as a psychic Astro is a detective of genius. He uses the psychic angle to attract customers but when someone hires him to solve a mystery he always gives them their money's worth. Very few crimes are capable of baffling Astro.

Any good fictional detective needs a sidekick. Astro's is the beautiful Valeska. She is a slightly unusual sidekick, being already a

skilled detective who is being trained by Astro in the mysteries of the art of crime-solving. There is considerable mutual respect between Astro and Valeska, and there's a hint that there may be more than respect involved. That's where the longer story arc (which occupies the entire collection of twenty-four stories) comes in but I won't spoil it by saying any more. The relationship between Astro and Valeska is as interesting as the actual cases they take on, although the cases are pretty interesting in their own right.

Astro is something of a scientific enthusiast, but he tends to use science more as an illustration of his pet theories than as a crime-solving tool. His interest in science is however an indication of his very logical mind. This, along with a profound understanding of human psychology, is the secret of his success as a detective.

Occult detectives were very much in fashion in 1912, but Burgess also makes use of another element that was in vogue at that time - the fascination with the Mysterious East. Astro himself is Egyptian, although he also claims to be a Buddhist. Astro's exotic origins are certainly useful to his pose as a psychic but his mind seems to be very much a rational western mind.

The stories themselves cover a wide range of crimes. In some cases there is no actual crime, merely a puzzle that is causing distress to one of Astro's clients. In other cases there are very real crimes, even involving murder.

Astro, the Master of Mysteries is a very entertaining collection. The stories work well as detective stories in the manner of the time. They don't have the intricate plotting of the later golden age of detective fiction nor do they adhere rigidly to the so-called rules of "fair play" that characterised the golden age. Nonetheless they're clever and Astro's business as a professional psychic gives the tales a unique flavour.

Fans of both straightforward crime fiction and occult detective stories should find a great deal to enjoy here. Highly recommended.

This collection is included in one of Coachwhip Press's *2 Detectives* volumes, paired with Max Rittenberg's Dr Wycherley collection *The Mind Reader*.



THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUTH

(1930)

Reviewed by D4Doom

The Truth About Youth is a 1930 pre-code offering from First National Pictures. It's notable for including both Loretta Young and Myrna Loy in its cast - I just love watching these two ladies in their pre-code films.

Richard Carewe (Conway Tearle) has raised the son of a deceased friend as his own son. This is where this movie can get a bit confusing, since the young man's name is Richard Dane (he's played by David Manners) and both these characters are referred to throughout the movie as Dick. Richard Dane also goes by the nickname Imp. In order to make things less confusing I will in the rest of this review refer to Richard Carewe as Richard and I will refer to the younger man as Imp. The fact that both men are named Richard will however become a plot point later on.



In raising the boy Richard has had help from various cronies (who are apparently the Imp's joint guardians) and from his housekeeper, and also from the housekeeper's lovely daughter Phyllis Ericson (Loretta Young). It has always been assumed that the Imp will marry Phyllis. She is a sweet girl and thoroughly respectable. They seem to get along. Maybe they're not wildly passionately in love but they have come to share that assumption that they will marry.

The worthies who have superintended the Imp's upbringing have planned a surprise party for his twenty-first birthday. They patiently await the young man's arrival but he does not return home until very very late. His excuse is that he had to attend a lecture. In fact Imp was pursuing a firefly. The firefly in question is Kara (Myrna Loy). She is a sexy night-club singer and dancer who is billed as The Firefly.

Imp is madly in love with Kara. He wants to marry her. Kara is madly in love with Imp's money. What she doesn't know is that Imp doesn't actually have any money. Kara is going to be more than a little bit disappointed when she finds out.



Kara is by no means opposed to the idea of marriage but she simply cannot conceive of the idea of marrying a man who isn't exceedingly rich.

Things start to get complicated, partly due to the fact that Richard Carewe and the Imp are both named Richard. There are wedding plans. There are misunderstandings. There are broken hearts. Richard Carewe decides to meddle and simply ends up making things more complicated.

The Truth About Youth is not a comedy but it's by no means grim. It has some elements that we would associate with pre-code sex comedies and some elements more associated with melodrama. One of the things I love about the pre-code era is that genres had not yet solidified.

Conway Tearle as Richard Carewe is very dull but then the character he is playing is a very conventional man who takes life terribly seriously. He thinks a lot about duty. David Manners is OK as the Imp. He is after all playing a young man who is a bit of an innocent and Manners gets that across. The Imp has had a sheltered upbringing and is wholly unequipped to resist Kara's brazen sexual allure.



The acting honours definitely go to the women. Loretta Young has the more thankless role as the good girl but her performance is lively and charming. And she's as cute as a button. Miss Young's vivaciousness works in the movie's favour - she's delightful enough to seem like a serious rival to Kara for a man's affections.

Myrna Loy got the plum bad girl role and obviously relished it. She could be very sexy indeed in her pre-code films. Kara is a very bad girl. She's a gold digger and a brazen hussy. It's impossible not to love her.

This a pre-code movie which means that you can't assume you'll get the conventional ending that the Production Code would have mandated had it been made after 1934. So the ending is not quite what you expect but I liked it.

The Truth About Youth is thoroughly enjoyable and the two lead female performances are a treat. Highly recommended.

This movie is paired with another First National pre-code offering, *The Right of Way* (1931), on a single disc in the Warner Archive series. *The Truth About Youth* gets a pretty decent transfer.



I am a weapon.
Marquis de X, Paris, 1925

THE FUCKNESS



By Nick August

**or, building a retaining wall midsummer in the south
with a friend while thinking about Frost**

It is the heat.
It is the humidity.
Sweating out last night's bourbon
pushing wheelbarrows
tossing dirt
laying brick—
well, “brick”—
before the sun
is so high
it punks you.

“My neighbor was going to help, too,” says my friend. “But something came up. It always does with that guy. He’ll be over here come Fall, though. Always brings good bourbon and cigars.”

If someone calls me
in the middle of the night
and asks me to bury a body,
it means I’m not his
friend and never was.

“Shoot, shovel, and shut up.”
Draggeth not innocents
into thy felony, sir. This isn’t an old
black comedy, friendo.

The better friendships are a history of sweating together:
shoplifting cigarettes and hiding in the woods; two-a-day
football practices in August in Alabama; planting food plots;
building tree stands; spray-epoxying rebuilt antique shop
machines; hauling debris to the dump after a tree fell on a
house; getting into a fight because you were “young, dumb, and
full of come” together at the wrong place at the wrong time.

The wall is done. Three days of work. And the patio stone for
the fire pit area. And the fire pit. “When it’s Fall and cool, he
says, we’ll drink here by the fire.”

We both know I won’t be here in the Fall. I have miles to go. We
sweat together, anyway. Some people, you just don’t want them
to sweat alone.

“Good fences,” says Frost.
He gets it. Zoom in. Way, way in.
Neighbors are complicated.
Friends are complex.
A wall is just a wall.

PERFORMANCE



By MT White

**A major new series
From the Substack 'Discursions'**

15

MYTHO-POLITICS & MYTHO-POETICS

**How political discourse is more myth-making;
how reading Kerouac and Thoreau means
more than going on the road or living in
cabins; men thinking and un-thinking.**

Conservatives, liberals, and every ideology in between, live within a political mythology. That does not mean fake or false politics, but in the words of Russian philosopher Aleksei Losev, it is, like myth, an “expressive” politics, because myth, like poetry “represent types of *expressive form*” [emphasis Losev’s] where the expressive is the integration of both the internal and the external, meaning...performance. The mythical and the poetical overlap constantly (like *The Odyssey* or The Bible) but they are distinct. Both

are detached forms, but poetics, or even the arts in total, are a form of “disinterested pleasure” (to use Kant’s phrase), a detachment from fact. If one sees someone point a gun in movie or on stage, no one in the crowd runs for the door. They have suspended both their belief and disbelief.

Myth, however, is a detachment from the mundane, an imbuing of material objects and material reality with mythical power. For example, a stick is in itself an object, a fallen branch from a tree, but a child discovering it can imbue with mystical power and deem it a magic wand, just as rocks can become healing crystals. “While remaining the same, things in myth acquire a unique meaning, comply with a unique idea that makes them detached,” a detachment of “facts in their *idea* from their usual meaning and purpose.” [emphasis Losev’s].

For example, American conservatism in this sense is mytho-political, a political mythology, where the American flag becomes a sacred image, and their values—like “family values” or “Judeo-Christian values”—become sacred values that need to be protected, a symbological system that loses their attachment to their common idea. A Christian pastor, without any contradiction, can campaign for a self-confessed adulterer like Donald Trump, because he stands for patriotic “Christian values”, while at the same time knowingly watch a pool attendant have sex with his wife—as in the case of Jerry Falwell Jr—because the “Christian Values” and what they represent have taken on a mythical value, detached from the mundane everyday life. Naturally, political opponents are imbued with a mythical reality of being “evil” or demonic, where conspiracy theories take factual occurrences and transpose them in to a mythical structure (whether it be elite pedophile rings portrayed as Satanic rituals, or the Illuminati, or the Vatican, or whoever else, controlling everything).

Naturally, this works to create political passion, where every election is portrayed with a dramatic immediacy of a battle between good and evil. This is the mythological performative reality of politics, because it reflects something common to all of us, the mythical living in us, our need to create relations between things, similar but different from poetic forms of relations. As Losev observes: “An ordinary thing sometimes turns out to be extremely mysterious, remarkable, and even miraculous—and yet it remains ordinary.” What is more ordinary, maybe even boring, yet so remarkably present in our life, than modern politics with leaders who we designate with god-like purpose, yet are the most fallible and ordinary of people? This is not to deny any veracity to

political causes and both their champions and critics. These mythical political issues and arguments are very real to people, inciting immeasurable passion.

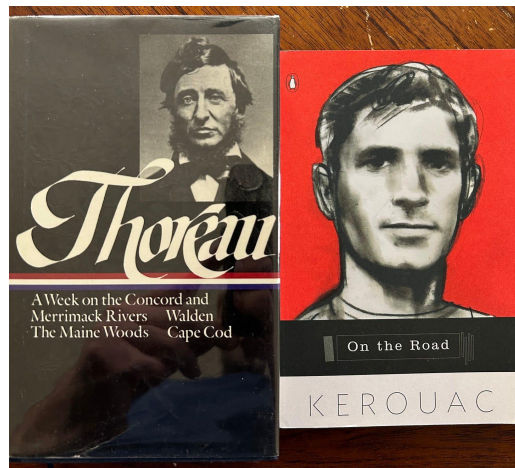
Could it be that conservatives' criticism of "liberal Hollywood" and "liberal art" is not quite a desire for their values to be affirmed? Most movies feature heroes who are family oriented (like every movie starring The Rock), pro-American and the like—it's really hard to find a Hollywood produced film that affirms say, communism (though there have been Marxist writers—as conservative's constantly remind us). Rather, do conservatives want a Hollywood and art, a poetics, that are completely steeped in their mythos and are angry because it does not exist? Could it also explain the need to constantly decipher plots and visuals for symbological affirmation of said mythos? Could it be the modern conservative iteration of myth does not want dialogue, but rather wants to subsume art and create a mytho-political poetics...something that just always seems out of its grasp, because its very essence, of "revealing by not revealing and of not revealing by revealing", is itself unable to be revealed, fully poetically verbalized, given consciousness, performed? Could it be because it is not rooted in history, really not rooted in anything, except for its own myth? And when this political mythology is expressed artistically it feels puling, trite, empty, if not outright bizarre (like the movies *Run Hide Fight*, *My Son Hunter* or the live-action version of *Atlas Shrugged*)? They are just a level above the entertainment some cults produce, because their forms of expression are rooted in the shallowest of cultural modes (like The Family International's SOS video) or maybe just shallow in general, everything geared towards promoting a message.

"Remember when you didn't know a guy's politics?" a friend asked. It does seem more prevalent, where one's political views seem to define a part of their being, where the personal mythos finds more value in a mytho-political expression rather than a mytho-poetic (to borrow a phrase from poet Robert Bly) or just aesthetics in general. What to attribute to this reversal? Many talk of "self-expression", but the only way to truly express the self is to allow the outer to express itself to you and affect your consciousness, hopefully expanding it. But now we have a reverse situation, we are trying to make the outer conform to our expression, our performance, wanting it to acknowledge and re-present our identity, whatever that identity is. The very root of "Identity Politics" is a need for external validation. How many political hopes are just personal hopes magnified? How much punditry is just a barely disguised careerism or even narcissism? What is the end result? A

weakening of the inner, a weakening of the self because it is turned on itself, living in a mundane world, so it needs fuel, it needs myth, it needs identity, and turns to the ever-present political mythologies to affirm identity—mythologies which are ever so present in the dominant media presentations. There are political realities affecting people—war, crime and poverty are ever present—and political action is necessary at times, but our personal relation to the political is backward to a degree.

I remember reading an internet ideologue describe his right wing node of the internet, one that cross-pollinated with pick-up artists, as a movement similar to “The Beats” of the 1950s, recalling Jack Kerouac and the like. I found it an odd association considering that many prominent members of the beat “movement”, like Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Neil Cassady, and Kerouac himself, all struggled with their respective vices—and even odder that the movement was not predominantly political in nature, though it certainly had political concerns and ramifications. There may be similarities between the internet pick up artist and Kerouac, sharing a love of women and political conservative sympathies. But the similarities are superficial, where the content of Kerouac is given precedence over his style, his performance. Anyone can be a Don Juan and hold political conservative views. The Beats, at least my elementary understanding of them, were inspired by the poetics of Thomas Wolfe, Henry Miller, and Louis Ferdinand Celine, sitting at an existential American crossroads of tradition (Kerouac was a French speaking Roman Catholic for example) and exploration, whether it be foreign modes of tradition and thinking (like Buddhism) tied to expansion of consciousness (drug use) or actual exploration by taking to the highways of America, with their poetic performance being an expression of the combined exploration. Going “On the Road” was both a form of metaphor and material reality. Kerouac needed to go on the literal road to explore and perform the poetical road. His concern was an American existential concern, in the tradition of Emerson, it was not an exclusively political or polemical concern. The world of the Beats was a world of poetry first not politics, a world of performance. The probing required, of both inner and outer worlds, individual form dialoguing with communal and outer forms, is very different than the decisive, irrevocable authority that political statement is performed, that political myth demands. The desire of the ideologues desires the energy a poet or philosopher possesses, but always negates the sources of said energy, negates style, negates performance.

In line with the Beats, many think the lesson in Thoreau's *Walden* means going out in nature and living in a cabin but that's a staid metaphysical view. The energy of Thoreau is the energy of Kerouac—physically going out so one can verbally go out—expanding consciousness. They are both pioneers of spirit. People want to imitate the content of the performance (going in to nature like Thoreau or traveling and picking up girls, like Kerouac) but that's missing its spirit, just as is going on a whaling vessel in order to be like Melville. We should try to harness or at least understand, the spirit, the performance, in order to inform our own spirit against our own experience.



One stayed in one place, the other went all over

The past needs to always be reckoned with, conserved, we must retain our memory, because the only way to inflect, forge new paths, improve upon old ones, balance, and clarify things is by being in constant discourse with our history, our myths, both personal and communal. So how we discourse with the personal and cultural past is of the greatest importance because we quickly learn it is not the past but ever present.

Emerson called the intellectual “Man thinking”. “Him nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures; him the past instructs; him the future invites.” Who our greater examples of thinking than Plato and Aristotle? Who are better playwrights, those creating, than Sophocles or Shakespeare? Does it mean we don’t do our thinking or own creating? No. We study them for their creative energies, their performances of thinking and creating, working with language, so as to inform our own thinking and creating, our own performances. Their acts inspire our actions; the work of the past becomes very present. This does not mean disregard for Plato or Shakespeare but rather it demands an intense regard, and study. To quote Emerson again, one must “become Shakespeare”, get behind the stories and plots and gauge the creative passion in the writing itself. As Ezra Pound noted art “should never be

dull”. Unfortunately, teachers and ideologues make it dull by reducing them to didactic exercises, analysis of pure content (which is what ideology is—ideational content). This is an abandonment of our initial love, just as God rebuked the church at Ephesus for abandoning their initial love in *Revelation*. We must return to our first love, remember what gave us so much excitement when we turned to art—not the ideology or lessons behind the works but the performances contained therein. We can respect them but we can also abandon them in a sense. We can hold them sacred while concomitantly de-sacralizing them. The descriptions of the past, its metaphors, are always candidates for troping, tools for our own use and purposes, just as they were used by our ancestors for as vocabularies for their own usages and purposings when they traveled their own physical and metaphorical road’s.

Now, it appears few care about the thinker and their ideas, their being Man Thinking. They care about how they will talk about the thinker, making oneself look good rather than truly understanding anything about or wanting to harness the energy of the respective thinker by analyzing their performance. The social media personality discussing *The Gulag Archipelago* on someone’s podcast yet the only version of the book they read was the abridged version of Solzhenitsyn’s classic, or the guy appearing on a friends podcast to discuss Nietzsche, who, before the podcast, commented on social media about how much of an idiot Nietzsche was, or a drama queen or whatever—point being, it’s obvious he was just reading Nietzsche for the podcast discussion panel—he was not an expert in any sense, similar to the a woman at a café, bedecked in tattoos, botox and wearing a glittering 80s heavy metal t-shirt, discussing with her friend about how Jesus was against “religion” and that having her Bible and “personal relationship” with God was all that mattered. All anecdotal examples for sure, but related in a grander scheme. Whether it’s Solzhenitsyn, Nietzsche or Jesus, no one in the examples above were trying to learn the truths revealed by the respective thinkers, or understand the thinking of the men thinking, but instead were trying to use them and their thoughts to “live their truth”, to look upon themselves, away from history, away from culture, time losing touch with its content. This is not the humble individualism Emerson wrote of, trying to humble oneself before creation and become a “transparent eyeball”. No, this is something else, a form of trying to make the creative energy humble to oneself, to please the ego, solipsism, a clouded eyeball with all eyes turned towards it, Man Unthinking.

NEXT WEEK—GOD, DEAD AND/OR ALIVE

THE STORM

By Dick Saint
Cécile

There was a severe weather warning for this evening, but the storm arrived a little earlier than expected, and chaos reigned at the pool. Some vacationers didn't even dare leave as the rain poured down with incredible intensity and bright lightning flashed across the sky.

And what about me in all this? I'm not afraid of the storm, far from it, but it wasn't part of my job to have to deal with people panicked by this downpour and the thunder that rolls without stopping, and I'm trying my best to reassure them.

When I think about it, they remind me of shipwrecked people, except they're on dry land. But they're definitely cut off from everything because the cell tower near the campsite has apparently gone down, making all communication impossible. So I go from person to person and talk to them; some even fall into my arms.

However, I cannot stop someone from talking about the end of the world or the consequences of such talk. That is, people huddle together, trying to postpone what seems inevitable by touching each other.

I don't know who started it, and it doesn't really matter. All I know is that very quickly, no doubt driven by some strange instinct for self-preservation, the first kisses were exchanged, then the first caresses, and now here I am, facing a human melee where it's impossible to distinguish who's penetrating, licking, or sucking whom. My lost sheep are in the throes of an orgy, a complete confusion of ages and genders.

At first, I try to reason with them. In vain. And then I end up being grabbed by one arm, then another. Perhaps it's better this way, I tell myself; being a voyeur made me a little uncomfortable, but being an active participant in this maelstrom allows me to let go and completely disconnect.

I don't know how long it was before the storm passed. Nor how many times I experienced pleasure from people I could barely see. In any case, little by little everyone began to regain their composure, and strange glances were exchanged. There was as much complicity as unease, because they knew they had just experienced something completely beyond their control, and while they might not be able to talk about it, they would have to live with it. As for me, I feel stronger for this new experience. Perhaps in a strange way, but I managed to prevent a panic attack.

They've all gone back to their real lives, and I find myself alone at the pool. The sky is gradually clearing, and for a moment, I feel like I've dreamt this whole thing. The sensation of semen trickling down my thighs, however, brings me back to reality. I need to take a shower, and then I'll put away the lounge chairs before closing up and heading back to my apartment. Just the same old routine.

STRIPPED BARE FOR THE MUMMY MONSTER



By Lucille Simmons

Chapter 6

The living room glowed with the dim flicker of the old TV, casting shadows across the walls as Richard and Crystal settled in for the night. Crystal sprawled on the couch, her cut-off jeans riding up her thighs, her halter top clinging to her braless curves, the faint outline of her nipples teasing through the thin fabric. Richard sat stiffly in a separate chair, his heart racing, barely registering the black-and-white cowboy show blaring on the screen—a dusty tale of gunslingers and saloons. His eyes kept drifting to Crystal. She's right there, so close, he thought, stealing glances, his body stirring. Crystal, meanwhile, was hooked on the show, her knees crossed, arms wrapped around herself as she

leaned forward, eyes locked on the rugged lead actor, his Stetson tilted, his jaw chiseled. God, he's hot, she thought, her pulse quickening despite knowing the actor was probably old enough to be her grandfather now. Richard caught the movement, his breath hitching, but he snapped his eyes back to the TV before she could catch him staring. Trying to break the tension, he blurted, "You like this show, Crystal?"

She shrugged, her hand dropping casually, her voice cool but her eyes glinting with that defiant spark. "It's alright," she lied, not wanting to admit how the actor's rugged charm had her hooked. "What about you? Ready for Count Freakazoid?"

Richard grinned, seizing the chance to keep her talking. "Yeah, he's awesome. Way better than this cowboy stuff." He hesitated, then added, "Can't wait to stay up late, Big Chrissy."

The nickname slipped out, and he froze, his face flushing. Oh no, she'll know I know. Crystal's eyebrows shot up, a teasing smirk curling her lips. "Big Chrissy, huh? So you know about that nickname?" she said, leaning forward, her halter top shifting, her breasts swaying slightly. "Guess you're not as innocent as you look, Richard."

She laughed, her tone playful but edged with her rebellious confidence.

"My tits seemed to grow overnight, you know? One day I'm just Chrissy, the next, boom—every girl in school's jealous, whispering behind my back, and every guy suddenly wants to get real friendly." She leaned back, crossing her arms under her chest, emphasizing her curves. Let him squirm, she thought, her rebellion thriving on the power she held over him, knowing he was another boy caught in her orbit. Richard's heart pounded, his mind screaming, God, I want to get friendly with her too. He imagined himself close to her, his hands on her, his lips on her breasts, joining her rebellion, not like Virgil with his crude fantasies. I'd worship her, not own her, he thought, his arousal mixing with his romantic longing. Crystal watched him, her gaze softening slightly. He's cute, she thought, all nervous and starry-eyed. Bet he dreams of losing his virginity to his babysitter, like every guy does. But she dismissed the idea—he was so young, probably still believing in Santa Claus or that wrestling was real, too innocent for her world of defiance and desire.

The TV flickered, and “Count Freakazoid” appeared, his blue makeup and widow’s peak making him a campy Dracula knockoff.

Crystal laughed, nudging Richard. “This guy’s probably just the local weatherman, hamming it up to pay his bar tab,” she said, her tone dripping with her usual rebellion against anything fake. “Come sit on the couch, Richard. I won’t bite.” She patted the cushion beside her, her grin daring him to join her. Richard’s heart leapt, and he scrambled over, sitting close enough to feel the warmth of her body, her scent—something wild and free—making his head spin. As they settled in, Crystal leaned back, her legs still crossed.

“You know, the problem with watching horror movies on TV? They cut out all the good stuff—bare boobies, people getting stabbed, chainsawed to bits. At the drive-in or The Roxy on main street, you get the real deal, uncut,” she said, her eyes glinting. “But guys use the drive-in as an excuse to maul girls like me, trying to make out in the back seat.”

She rolled her eyes, but her smirk betrayed her thrill at the attention, her rebellion feeding on the power she held over those boys. Richard felt a pang of sadness—she shouldn’t have to deal with that—but it quickly turned to arousal, imagining himself at the drive-in with her, his hands exploring her curves, her body yielding to his touch. I’d be different, he thought, but the idea of “mauling” her, of being close like that, sent a shiver through him. Count Freakazoid’s voice boomed, announcing a local carnival was coming to town, complete with a freak show and a real Egyptian mummy exhibit. Crystal sat up, excited. “We should go see that,” she said, her voice alive with her thrill-seeking spirit. “Freak shows, Mummies—way better than this crap.”

Richard nodded, his mind racing. A carnival with Crystal? He pictured them wandering the midway, her halter top drawing stares, her laughter cutting through the crowd, her rebellion making every moment electric. She’s untamed, and I’ll be with her, he thought, his body buzzing with anticipation. Richard wanted to be part of her world, to share her rebellion, to be close to the girl who made his heart race and his body ache.

TO BE CONTINUED

New
Arabian
Nights

Robert Louis
Stevenson

NEW ARABIAN NIGHTS



BY
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1920

THE SUICIDE CLUB

THE ADVENTURE OF THE HANSOM CABS

1

Lieutenant Brackenbury Rich had greatly distinguished himself in one of the lesser Indian hill wars. He it was who took the chieftain prisoner with his own hand; his gallantry was universally applauded; and when he came home, prostrated by an ugly sabre cut and a protracted jungle fever, society was prepared to welcome the Lieutenant as a celebrity of minor lustre. But his was a character remarkable for unaffected modesty; adventure was dear to his heart, but he cared little for adulation; and he waited at foreign watering-places and in Algiers until the fame of his exploits had run through its nine days' vitality

and begun to be forgotten. He arrived in London at last, in the early season, with as little observation as he could desire; and as he was an orphan and had none but distant relatives who lived in the provinces, it was almost as a foreigner that he installed himself in the capital of the country for which he had shed his blood.

On the day following his arrival he dined alone at a military club. He shook hands with a few old comrades, and received their warm congratulations; but as one and all had some engagement for the evening, he found himself left entirely to his own resources. He was in dress, for he had entertained the notion of visiting a theatre. But the great city was new to him; he had gone from a provincial school to a military college, and thence direct to the Eastern Empire; and he promised himself a variety of delights in this world for exploration. Swinging his cane, he took his way westward. It was a mild evening, already dark, and now and then threatening rain. The succession of faces in the lamplight stirred the Lieutenant's imagination; and it seemed to him as if he could walk for ever in that stimulating city atmosphere and surrounded by the mystery of four million private lives. He glanced at the houses, and marvelled what was passing behind those warmly-lighted windows; he looked into face after face, and saw them each intent upon some unknown interest, criminal or kindly.

"They talk of war," he thought, "but this is the great battlefield of mankind."

And then he began to wonder that he should walk so long in this complicated scene, and not chance upon so much as the shadow of an adventure for himself.

"All in good time," he reflected. "I am still a stranger, and perhaps wear a strange air. But I must be drawn into the eddy before long."

The night was already well advanced when a plump of cold rain fell suddenly out of the darkness. Brackenbury paused under some trees, and as he did so he caught sight of a hansom cabman making him a sign that he was disengaged. The circumstance fell in so happily to the occasion that he at once raised his cane in answer, and had soon ensconced himself in the London gondola.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver.

"Where you please," said Brackenbury.

And immediately, at a pace of surprising swiftness, the hansom drove off through the rain into a maze of villas. One villa was so like another, each with its front garden, and there was so little to distinguish the deserted lamp-lit streets and crescents through which the flying hansom took its way, that Brackenbury soon lost all idea of direction.

He would have been tempted to believe that the cabman was amusing himself by driving him round and round and in and out about a small quarter, but there was something business-like in the speed which convinced him of the contrary. The man had an object in view, he was hastening towards a definite end; and Brackenbury was at once astonished at the fellow's skill in picking a way through such a labyrinth, and a little concerned to imagine what was the occasion of his hurry. He had heard tales of strangers falling ill in London. Did the driver belong to some bloody and treacherous association? and was he himself being whirled to a murderous death?

The thought had scarcely presented itself, when the cab swung sharply round a corner and pulled up before the garden gate of a villa in a long and wide road. The house was brilliantly lighted up. Another hansom had just driven away, and Brackenbury could see a gentleman being admitted at the front door and received by several liveried servants. He was surprised that the cabman should have stopped so immediately in front of a house where a reception was being held; but he did not doubt it was the result of accident, and sat placidly smoking where he was, until he heard the trap thrown open over his head.

"Here we are, sir," said the driver.

"Here!" repeated Brackenbury. "Where?"

"You told me to take you where I pleased, sir," returned the man with a chuckle, "and here we are."

It struck Brackenbury that the voice was wonderfully smooth and courteous for a man in so inferior a position; he remembered the speed at which he had been driven; and now it occurred to him that the hansom was more luxuriously appointed than the common run of public conveyances.

"I must ask you to explain," said he. "Do you mean to turn me out into the rain? My good man, I suspect the choice is mine."

The choice is certainly yours,” replied the driver; “but when I tell you all, I believe I know how a gentleman of your figure will decide. There is a gentlemen’s party in this house. I do not know whether the master be a stranger to London and without acquaintances of his own; or whether he is a man of odd notions. But certainly I was hired to kidnap single gentlemen in evening dress, as many as I pleased, but military officers by preference. You have simply to go in and say that Mr. Morris invited you.”

“Are you Mr. Morris?” inquired the Lieutenant.

“Oh, no,” replied the cabman. “Mr. Morris is the person of the house.”

“It is not a common way of collecting guests,” said Brackenbury: “but an eccentric man might very well indulge the whim without any intention to offend. And suppose that I refuse Mr. Morris’s invitation,” he went on, “what then?”

“My orders are to drive you back where I took you from,” replied the man, “and set out to look for others up to midnight. Those who have no fancy for such an adventure, Mr. Morris said, were not the guests for him.”

These words decided the Lieutenant on the spot.

“After all,” he reflected, as he descended from the hansom, “I have not had long to wait for my adventure.”

He had hardly found footing on the side-walk, and was still feeling in his pocket for the fare, when the cab swung about and drove off by the way it came at the former break-neck velocity. Brackenbury shouted after the man, who paid no heed, and continued to drive away; but the sound of his voice was overheard in the house, the door was again thrown open, emitting a flood of light upon the garden, and a servant ran down to meet him holding an umbrella.

“The cabman has been paid,” observed the servant in a very civil tone; and he proceeded to escort Brackenbury along the path and up the steps. In the hall several other attendants relieved him of his hat, cane, and paletot, gave him a ticket with a number in return, and politely hurried him up a stair adorned with tropical flowers, to the door of an apartment on the first storey. Here a grave butler inquired his name, and announcing “Lieutenant Brackenbury Rich,” ushered him into the drawing-room of the house.

A young man, slender and singularly handsome, came forward and greeted him with an air at once courtly and affectionate. Hundreds of candles, of the finest wax, lit up a room that was perfumed, like the staircase, with a profusion of rare and beautiful flowering shrubs. A side-table was loaded with tempting viands. Several servants went to and fro with fruits and goblets of champagne. The company was perhaps sixteen in number, all men, few beyond the prime of life, and with hardly an exception, of a dashing and capable exterior. They were divided into two groups, one about a roulette board, and the other surrounding a table at which one of their number held a bank of baccarat.

“I see,” thought Brackenbury, “I am in a private gambling saloon, and the cabman was a tout.”

His eye had embraced the details, and his mind formed the conclusion, while his host was still holding him by the hand; and to him his looks returned from this rapid survey. At a second view Mr. Morris surprised him still more than on the first. The easy elegance of his manners, the distinction, amiability, and courage that appeared upon his features, fitted very ill with the Lieutenant’s preconceptions on the subject of the proprietor of a hell; and the tone of his conversation seemed to mark him out for a man of position and merit. Brackenbury found he had an instinctive liking for his entertainer; and though he chid himself for the weakness, he was unable to resist a sort of friendly attraction for Mr. Morris’s person and character.

“I have heard of you, Lieutenant Rich,” said Mr. Morris, lowering his tone; “and believe me I am gratified to make your acquaintance. Your looks accord with the reputation that has preceded you from India. And if you will forget for a while the irregularity of your presentation in my house, I shall feel it not only an honour, but a genuine pleasure besides. A man who makes a mouthful of barbarian cavaliers,” he added with a laugh, “should not be appalled by a breach of etiquette, however serious.”

And he led him towards the sideboard and pressed him to partake of some refreshment.

“Upon my word,” the Lieutenant reflected, “this is one of the pleasantest fellows and, I do not doubt, one of the most agreeable societies in London.”

TO BE CONTINUED

THE DIARY OF CHARLIE WINKLE



10/10/2025

I have been at the Hotel Kempinski for 1 week now with my two daughters and one son from Russia and their Mother, the beautiful and charismatic Katerina Novikov.

For one week now, we have as a family, bathed in the sea, played rounds of golf (at the nearby Golf Club Adriatic) and eaten dinner together and this will be my first time since the beginning of the trip, eating dinner alone, at my private villa (which is part of the Hotel Kempinski, my Russian family has their own, separate villa, 50 meters away) as the rest of the family is otherwise occupied.....

And until now I hadn't realized how badly I needed this time to myself.

Dostoevsky said it best, "Solitude for the mind is as essential as food is for the body."

I take a deep breath in.

On the table on my balcony, which extends from my upstairs bedroom, is a hamburger and chips which has been delivered from the hotel's restaurant. A hamburger and chips is in my opinion the greatest meal in the world. I have also ordered a coke.

After I have eaten my dinner I am going to finish reading the John D. MacDonald novel "The Last One Left". I have read this book many times before (and will likely read it many times again.) It is a fantastic book.

The joy of being alone, it's almost palpable.

From my balcony I can see the sea although cannot hear it. The only sounds I hear are birds. No human voices. No music. No traffic.

"How fortunate I am," thinks I.....

Just then, I hear a knock on my bedroom door.

"What the....."

"Who is it!?"

Katerina Novikov, mother of my children, enters my bedroom wearing a turquoise evening dress and scarlet red high heels. She walks through my bedroom and out onto my balcony and bends over and kisses me on the cheek, her smile radiant. I recognize her perfume, it is "A Drop D'issey" by Issey Miyake, a perfume which I had previously given to her.

"Charlie! I thought that maybe you'd like some company.... I thought maybe you'd be sad eating dinner all by yourself and so I've come to join you" she says sitting herself down in the seat opposite me and pressing her bare leg gently, but firmly against mine.

EDEN



A Romance
by Ernst Graf

"EDEN by Ernst Graf is a serialised erotic romance in Penicillin magazine, blending vivid tales of seduction, decadence, and raw human desire. It draws from Weimar-era Berlin's hedonism and personal exploits, provoking reflection on lust and life's fleeting pleasures."

Grok

CHAPTER 177

A GASPING

CASANOVA

I woke up naked (it was an unbearably hot night) with a full erection thinking about that black-haired Latina in short stripy dress on Saturday. I love her. I love all the women I have ever met in pubs and hooked them, made them agitated, twirling their hair, biting their lips, getting excited, hands shaking. I could have very much enjoyed making love to all of them, but I just let the moments go. They are always with people, other men or friends and family. This Latina, though, was on her own, still so unusual to see a woman drinking on her own in a pub. So powerful. Quite powerful to see a man drinking alone in a pub too. There is a power about a single man or single woman. When you are with someone it is like you lose that power. The power of being AVAILABLE. What use this power, though, if you never take advantage of it?

The little visual flirtation with the Latina was so sexy though, so thrilling. The eye fucking. The mentally undressing. The mental projection into her mind from a distance of five feet “I want to fuck you” and the instantaneous fast rising and falling of her chest, the biting of her lips, the sucking her lip. Her own arousal.

These are delicious moments, and are why I go drinking, and why I cannot wait to go drinking as soon as the pubs open the next day.

It is the greatest pleasure of my life, to go drinking for hours looking for girls who turn me on. The only other pleasure in my life is writing about it. Writing in general. I cannot imagine people who don't write. It is almost horrific, to think of it.

Just three hours till the pubs open and I start again. I am not an alcoholic, I am addicted to looking at GIRLS. There are none here in my flat, alas (or thankfully), so I must go out, find a nice pub window, and look for them. I am like a gasping, bloated, loathsome Casanova. Not the glamorous idealised Casanova, but the desperate almost automaton-like abomination of *Fellini's Casanova*. A mechanical addiction.

L I G H T

YOU'RE NEVER What People EXPECT U to be; IN EVERY NEW Community U STAR as an ANOMALY - ✨ INITIATOR

⚠️ "YOU'VE GONE ROGUE" — FALSE IDOLS WERE BUILT IN YOUR IMAGE ✨ TO DIMINISH YOUR 'STAR POWER' 🧠👁️💯 UR AUTHENTICITY WAS A CURSE BUT NOW IT'S UR Master CARD 💎♣️ — Those Who "FIT IN" ARE BEING EXPOSED 👁️⚡
👉 Chosen ONE— UR WAY AHEAD OF UR TIME. UR Sexual 🌶️ & Spiritual ENERGIES ARE NOT SUPPRESSED
📍 Chosen One - U GAIN POWER & GRACE FROM The PAIN THEY INFLICT on U. YOU'LL SEE UR TRANSFORMATION 🌋

1230 in the — for first of the day. Obviously unfortunately a much quieter vibe than last week but well, we still hold out hope for something before I finish. I'm the only customer right now. Not good.

As ever it just takes one girl to bring the day to life, and my cock to life.

Yes it only takes one girl, the beer goggle effect helps too, and being on my first my mojo a little flat obviously.

Looking through my phone for some sexy photos to spark me to life but not much there either. I had to delete all my Katharina pics from my phone a long time ago of course, and from my wall. She's just too pretty and sexy.

Why did I cut her off? Why did I send her £800? The same reason. It felt in that second the right path. I would not have been able to live with myself if I had not sent the money to save her life.

I would have lived in shame.

Any young women with healthy BMI unhappy in your relationship have you considered converting to me?

If you see someone who looks like a retard, like these two guys who just came in, they are. Beauty goes with intelligence, doesn't it?

From my limited experience of women I'd say the biggest turn ons are—

1. You make them laugh. Clichés are clichés for a reason.
2. Other women start flirting with you.
3. Intelligence.
4. Mystery.

In return the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. I haven't had a good meal since splitting from my wife and my mother passing.

*

Up 930am. Feeling the effects of FIVE days of drinking, three work days and two off days. My third and final off day this week begins. Heart hurting, kidneys hurting, head hurting, BOTH feet swollen with blood pressure. I will try to go out a bit later today. Monday was as rubbish as Sunday. Not one sexy girl did I see. Annoying that my drink sessions on my work days were so fucking exciting but I pulled out of doing something i.e. Chinese massage, thinking I will leave that to my days off but my days off have been so flat and uninspiring. I never even came close to wanting to do anything.

This is third anniversary of the afternoon July 1st, 2022 (1922), when I went up to a Sphinx bedroom with Georgina, and had sex for the first time in more than two Chinese Flu lost years. A magical magical moment. It is was blisteringly hot, more than 30°C, she threw the shutters wide open and I was worried that the houses on the other side of the square could see us naked and fucking, but she said it was fine, don't worry about it, and it did feel so sexy, and it being so blindingly bright outside and so dark in our bedroom with the lights off I doubt they could see anything

really, and then we did it, and it was one of the loveliest experiences of making love I have ever had. She will always stay in my heart because of that. It felt like being in Nice, or the French Riviera somewhere. A quite extraordinary mix of sensations.

And then two months later, of course, Katharina walked into the Sphynx and then I always went with Katharina instead of Georgina and no doubt hurt her feelings.

*

I think my development actually stopped on the last day of 1979. Not sure I developed any further at all after that.

99% of boob jobs are a disaster. I would make them illegal. Reduction even more so.

I was watching a YouTube video before leaving the house of the old 50s and 60s Soho bohemia, Francis Bacon, John Deakin, Muriel Belcher, the Colony Room, French House, etc, and quite frankly they all seem like ghastly people, the last people I personally would want to be in a pub with.

When I think of Soho bohemia I just think of people who love the sound of their own voices. A hell for me. My Bohemia has always been an autistic one. A slight sense of imposter wannabe syndrome whenever I go to the French House, for instance, but then I look around at all the “cool” people around me and think “Have they published any books? Write a weekly literary magazine?”

Bohemia is always in a fifty yard radius of wherever I am.

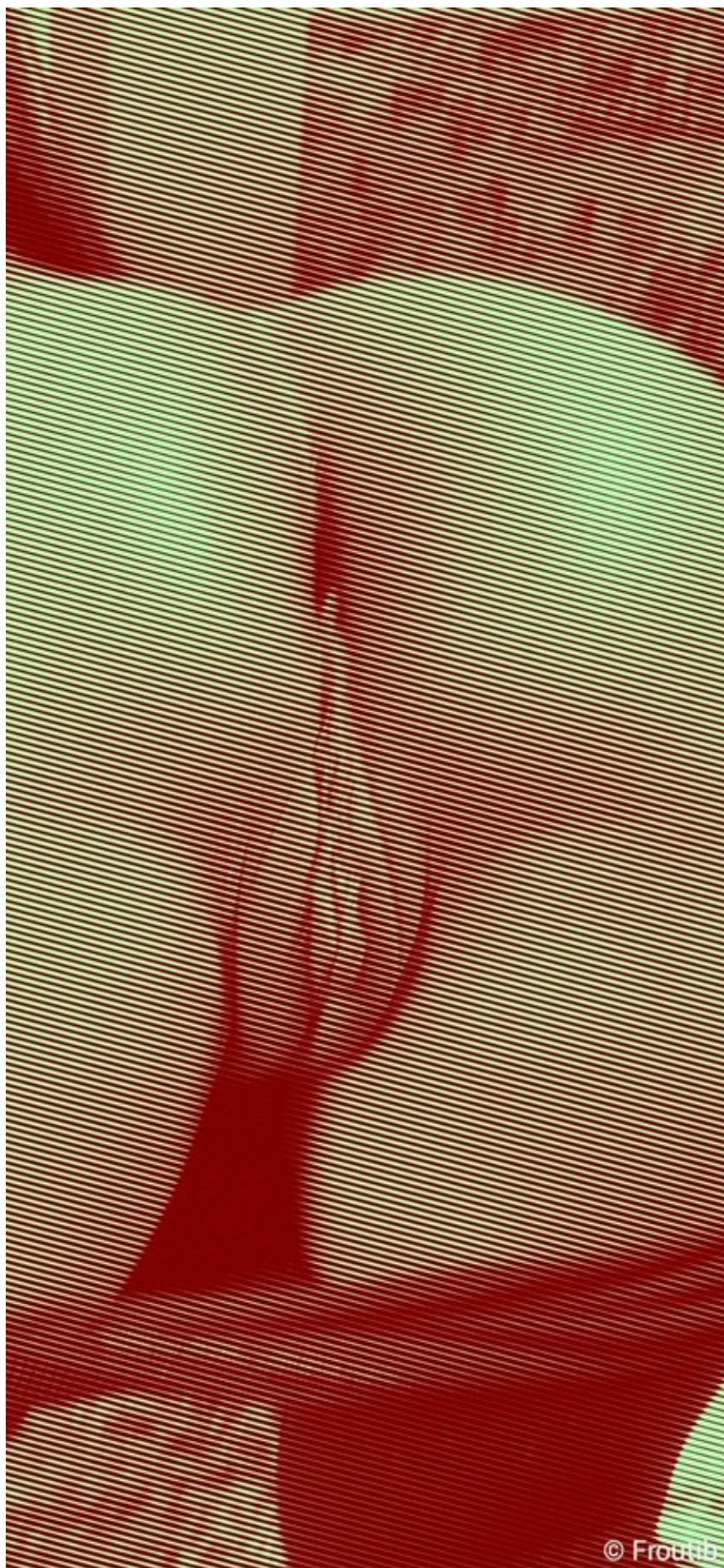
A man drinking alone in a pub, even more so a woman, is instantly fascinating.

This is the power of being alone.

When I'm at work I work as hard as I possibly can. When off I drink as hard as I can.



Mystery by Frouitb



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Apprêtée by Froutib



CHAPTER 178

KATHARINA

Well, I did it, I sent a message to Katharina. Replying to her message from two weeks ago to say she is coming to visit me at the end of the year at my address, to say “Well, it would certainly be nice to see you again”. All afternoon I have been thinking about it, and coincidentally I see now at 427pm a new little video from her looking sad, fed up, singing a sad little song to herself like a Brazilian Pierrot, maybe feeling abandoned by me, thinking it so unfair, when she loves me so much, and is always telling me if I come to Brazil to visit her I will sleep in her bed, with her, stuffing cake in her mouth, comfort eating.

Katharina’s TikTok 20 hours ago "You take too long to answer me" with pretty long brown hair in her car, pursed lips kiss, but sad.

1 week ago "Why have you been single for four years?" The question aimed at herself.

18th June It seems like I'm no good, but when you get involved with me you start to be sure.

15th June Just wait for your friend to hesitate and you'll have your delicious cocksucker.

15th June Tall muscular guy doesn't give it to anyone.

If by some miracle I get to keep the Eden job after August 18, as Night Porter, perhaps I will reestablish contact with her then because I will then feel, if the sums add up, that I am safe for life. A secure income for life in a place I like. "If you're still interested, let me know" I heard — saying to —, which makes it sound like he actively wants — to take a NP position, and perhaps then also that would apply to me.

Oh my God my gum is so swollen. That is like an abscess.

Being with Katharina on the bed was always lovely. After the first time we pretty much never had sex again, we were just lying naked talking. In the end that was why I got upset, it cost me so much money just to lie on a bed with her for 30 minutes talking, it was ridiculous. I wanted to be talking to her for hours, both of us naked together for hours. She was always lovely to be with in that intimate setting.

I am worried about my gum. Worried about my redundancy. Perhaps when I clear these worries, I can say hello to her again.

[CHOSEN ONES!! You're Becoming DANGEROUSLY POWERFUL 🔥 And Your FEARLESSNESS TERRIFIES Them CHOSEN ONE, U PERFECTLY PLANNED & EXECUTED UR EXIT FROM THEM 🔥 U DESERVE AN OSCAR 4 THIS PERFORMANCE](#)

Why is Katharina so determined to come to Berlin? Even just for two weeks? Not surely just to thank me for what I did for her? Just to see her friend? I am coming very close to re-establishing contact. But I want to know what is happening at work first. Am I really to be out of a job on August 18 or can I continue where I am, in which case I will feel safe (enough) for life? Most of the guys working there have been working there 20 years or more. If I

STAY after August 18 and take the NP position, I can see me too being there for the next 20 years.

An absolutely pivotal moment in my whole life (again).

Make or break.

There must be a reason why I sent her the £800, and all that money for English lessons, and motorbike. At a deep level, the universe was telling me it was the right thing to do, and I will be rewarded for it.

Maybe by re-establishing contact with Katharina now, it will bring me luck at this very sad and uncertain moment in my life. She is coming back into my life to make it really wonderful.

There is a reason she blew my mind when she walked in the door of the Sphinx that steamy hot about-to-storm Monday night three years ago. There is a reason why she took over my life then, for a while at least. None of it was a lie. My emotions were not a lie, I mean. My desire for her was not a lie.

My loving just lying there on that bed talking to her for half an hour at a time was not a lie, me wanting to spend hours lying naked on a bed talking to her (and other things of course, hopefully, though I was not able to then, for psychological reasons).

There is a reason I told myself it is my life's mission to have Katharina there in my flat in London, and now Berlin, even if it is for one day only.

When I turned against that, and changed my mind, it seemed she did not. She is the one pushing to make it happen now. Maybe she just wants me to pay for her plane ticket so she can come visit her friend for free. Well, there are rewards for me too, perhaps (not knowing exactly what she has in mind when she gets here of course).

The way I have hooked all these girls in pubs in the last few weeks and months is no lie. The number of girls who become so agitated by my proximity, even to the point of knocking their drinks over.

There must be a reason those two gay men tried to pick me up in the space of three days in the —. I cannot be SO fucking ugly can I? There must BE something magnetic and mesmerising about me.



Maybe Katharina is my destiny. Not for marriage, or anything like that, as I realise now that is financially completely impossible, but for one visit this Christmas, and perhaps an annual thing.

Wouldn't it be nice to have Katharina sitting beside me in a Berlin pub? Wouldn't it be nice to be lying naked in bed with Katharina but this time with no half hour time limit? Wouldn't it be nice to spend the nights sleeping with Katharina in my own bed?

📺 People are SO IMPRESSED by how you HANDLED this DIS...

We can say me and Katharina never ended, we just have different phases. We have had 3 clear phases so far, the first phase of meeting her in 1922 Paris and repeatedly going back to see her, then second phase of giving her the money to escape back to Brazil and then helping her for a year just to give her a chance to

get herself back on her feet and rebuild, then the third phase where I cut off all contact completely and withdrew. That might have been the end, but perhaps now a 4th phase begins, we speak again and she comes to meet me and stay with me in Berlin? We pick up where we left off? We pick up from that awful last night in Paris when I walked back to my hotel in the rain, crying? Now what went wrong that night, we CAN put right?

*

18 hours after I sent my message to her no reply whatsoever! After more than six months of ignoring all her messages, questions, attempts to call me, I now feel slighted she has not replied to my message last night! I wonder if it is like *Last Tango in Paris*, where after Schneider's Jeanne tells Brando she loves him and wants to marry him, he becomes brutally cold to her and rejects her approach, only to go away and think about it, and her idea eats into his loneliness, and he realises, yes, he loves her too and does want to be with her, but it is already too late. His rejection of her has hardened her heart against him and it is always too late after that.

I expect she never had any intention of coming to Berlin at the end of the year, she was just trying to provoke some reaction, and was saddened that I did not reply—not for 21 days anyway. Perhaps I will never get any more messages from her again and suddenly I feel sad about it. Oh! I really loved her!

Her message to say she would visit me in Berlin at the end of the year, "at your address you sent me", was vicious, vengeful, meant to scare me, and make me feel stalked, and she never had any intention of doing so, perhaps. But in me it has been working away inside my subconscious, and now I think how lovely it would be, and I tell her so—21 days later—that I would welcome her visit, and from her.....nothing!

Perhaps this will be the end of all her messages too, now, and it is finally ended.

This of course makes me feel a little panicky, what have I done, look how beautiful she is! What I have thrown away! Look at that face! Look at those tits! Incredible NATURAL voluptuous 23-year-old Brazilian tits!



At work last night I hoped to hear from — that they had been finally told what the pay rate will be, but no, still no news, no white smoke, they are still thinking about it, but — apparently thinks it should be MORE than what the day porters are getting, which would be fantastic news indeed (still with no guarantee my own application would be accepted). But he also told me — had fucked up by getting involved in some thing he did not need to (as he always does). — has gone from No.1 favourite to fucking himself. He was thinking to make himself the hero again, but has gone very very wrong.

Worried about my jaw, it changes the contour of my face, this bulge in my gum. Who knows what permanent damage it is doing.

Well, at least I am glad I HAVE replied to Katharina's message about her coming to visit me at my address at the end of the year. If it was a bluff then I have called it, and I have put the ball back in her court. If there is no further contact between us now, then it is her fault, and I can at least have a clear conscience. Or it gives her a conundrum to solve now. How does she respond?

Another conundrum—will I stay at Eden after the date of my redundancy or not?

Two huge pivotal moments in my life.



To see Katharina here in my house would be the culmination of a dream and a mission I have had since that first mindblowing night I met her in Paris back on September 4, 2022 (1922).

One of the highest nights of my whole life if not the No.1 highest night of my whole life.

Ah a new Tiktok from her 14 hours ago, just after 1am my time, that is three or four hours after I sent her my message, and roughly 9pm her time, at home in blue vest and happily mouthing along to some Brazilian song, smiling, ending with a wink and a kiss. I know it is for me. No written words appended to this little video but she looks happy (and in her previous WhatsApp video from that MORNING she had looked sad and hopeless and sounded it as she sang sadly to some little song), so I am glad I sent my message. A way forward has been cleared perhaps after all. Game on, perhaps, after all. The story of Katharina and I will perhaps move forward to the next step, after all.

— at work will have felt brutally embarrassed by the outcome of his unnecessary intervention. A massive own goal. Even when I was not on duty, I moved myself another step forward, and improved my own position. Sometimes you don't need to make genius chess moves, you just wait for the others to blunder, and instantly your position has been massively improved without you **NEEDING** to make any move yourself.

This is why chess is so like life, and life so like chess, and is what gives chess its enduring glory. Sometimes you can go from a completely losing position to a completely winning position **WITHOUT YOU YOURSELF DOING ANYTHING!** It is quite incredible. Even if you are in a losing position, no moves left to make, just hang on, and hang on and wait for the other's incredible blunder. Then suddenly you **HAVE** easy moves to make to progress to victory, an easy path to victory just opens up which simply was not there before.

So, a massively interesting and pivotal period of my life, interesting, pivotal, worrying, depressing, and many other things. Will I or will I not be kept on by Eden after August 18 and my Eden career then potentially keep me safely in a job forever? Will or will Katharina not come to visit me in my flat at the end of the year and if so will I finally achieve my impossible dream of having her here, in my home? That gorgeous, beautiful, voluptuous 23-year-old Brazilian beauty all to myself in my own flat?

What, what, what is going to happen?

Replying to Katharina has put a new injection of blood into myself. Something potentially very exciting **COULD** still happen. Will she really ever be here with me here in my little flat? In my own bed? A new jolt of electricity into my old decaying Frankenstein's monster body.

—'s fuck up and blunder has also put a new injection of excited blood into me. — and — made themselves look foolish and I come out of looking the wise one more than ever.

—'s blunder has improved my spirits enormously, my reply to Katharina's message and reopening our line of communication

and her smiling TikTok response (even if no direct response), has improved my spirits enormously.

After I met Katharina in Paris two & a half years ago, I yearned to bring her to London and have her in my own flat, but there were so many impossible obstacles to overcome, I knew deep down it could never happen, she had a 1-year-old son, she had no papers to travel, in no way could she come to England, and after all why on Earth would she want to? A 20-year-old Brazilian babe come to be with an old English guy like me, when she can literally have any gorgeous Brazilian stud she wants? But bit by bit, chess moves, chess moves, I made things happen, I took out Life Insurance for her, I put her in my Will leaving everything to her, sent the Will to her, bought the ticket home for her, paid for her year of English lessons, paid for her motorcycle installments which she eventually was able to trade in for the car she now drives. And now she can come. Her incentive is that she can stay with me for her 2 week trip and save herself the HUGE cost of hotels, and who knows maybe she will convince me to pay her air ticket for her. She gets a free 2 week holiday to visit her friend at my expense. Suddenly that seems an inviting option for her. I have made it possible. Chess moves. Chess moves.

"If you want loyalty, don't give people comfort. Give them elevation. Help them become someone they didn't believe they could be. We stay loyal not to kindness, but to those who rewired our view of ourselves."

Machiavelli Bot

Katharina loves me, as I gave her the chance to be free, to make something of herself and to give a life to her son. She just needed a leg up and I gave her that. That is something that can never be undone, it happened, and she will always remember it.

"Emotional independence is lethal. When your self-worth isn't tied to approval, praise loses power. Guilt misses. Manipulation collapses. The moment they realise they can't move you emotionally, they either fear you or try to worship you."

"You don't build deep rapport by oversharing. You build it by asking the one question no one else thought to ask. When someone feels like you see

what others miss, they open, not from comfort, but from curiosity. Precision breaks walls faster than kindness."

I did something no one else had ever done for her—took out Life Insurance, and made a Will to leave everything I had to her. I also gave her £800 to escape from the prison she was living in.

What I wrote back in No.71 "Katharina has become my Jeanne in *Last Tango in Paris*. She will be the ruin and death of me as it was for Brando but it will also be the greatest final flourish I could ever have wished for. Beyond my wildest dreams..." Jeanne in *Last Tango* is so often a reference point I return to again and again. A little bit like Anna Karina in *Pierrot le Fou*, Fellini's *8½*, Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, Art Garfunkel & Theresa Russell in *Bad Timing*, Charlotte Rampling & Dirk Bogarde in *The Night Porter*, this is why these remain among my favourite films forever.

"Give them emotional highs, then go silent. Not to punish, but to pattern. The brain seeks balance, it replays what it can't resolve. You weren't kind. You were contrast. And contrast is addictive when it feels like love that vanishes without warning."

My six months of cutting her off, ignoring all her messages, her calls, injured her pride, and created so many questions she wants answers to, sucking her into me more than ever. If she was resistant to meeting me again before, she now needs to. It is inevitable and HAS to happen. That goes for both of us.

"The person who shows no need will always appear more powerful than the one who constantly performs. In every room, the one who wants nothing commands everything. It's not detachment, it's weaponised restraint."

The fact I showed I can live without her very easily makes her determined to put herself centre stage again, and that of course can only mean in my bed, on her knees, before my cock.

The way to a man's heart is of course not really through his stomach though I cannot deny it is the biggest thing I think of when I think of my late mother and ex wife. You can get sex and blowjobs anywhere, but my God it has been YEARS since I last

had a really amazingly good roast dinner like my mum and my wife used to cook on a daily basis.

The most stressful thing you can do is have great potential but do nothing about it. It'll drive you crazy every day that you don't take action. Entertainment can make you forget briefly. It won't last, though. There will always be a voice in your head telling you that you should be doing more. If you hear that voice, listen to it. It's not gonna go away.

There is potential for more in my relationship with Katharina. I am sure there is.

Imagine walking into all my local pubs hand in hand with Katharina. Minds BLOWN.

Not least my own.

I want to see how that girl LOOKS in Berlin. What make up or fashion she might adopt affected by the city and culture she has arrived in.

Do I really want it? Or do I want others to see that I have it?

1028

Sometimes I find a new X or YouTube account and I think I just invented him or her, because they are now just voicing my own thoughts exactly. Frequencies innit, we all just on the same energy field. Sometimes our frequencies fluctuate so we are for a while on the exact same frequency as someone else.

It hurts like hell when someone makes you feel special, then suddenly leaves you hanging, and you have to act like you don't care at all.

1028

I can imagine that happened to Katharina.

1028s posts just from the last ten DAYS are insanely matched to my own situation right now

Being a good person can be both a blessing and a burden. Kindness can be exploited, generosity can lead to burnout, and compassion can be mistaken for weakness.

People expect you to keep showing up after they've made it impossible to stay. That's manipulation. Respect goes both ways.

Why Katharina should know and I am sure does though would never admit it, why I had to sever/pause our relationship after black spy's repulsive disrespect, vulgarity, vileness.

For a relationship to be successful, the woman chases the man, the man chases his goals.

If I LOSE my job in August, she will lose all respect for me.

If you don't become the monster you'll become the food.

Says it all.

I am falling back in love with Katharina (allowing myself to). I am ready for her now. It follows a long period when I have had no longing for Paris or Sphynx. Indeed on my days off I was feeling a yearning for Black Eagle in Nuremberg, nothing for Sphynx.

And oh at the end of these six nights I do have a DB ticket waiting and already paid for to take me to Paris for two nights. Tuesday out, Thursday morning back. I could go to Paris, yes, but could instead go to Nuremberg for Tuesday night in Nuremberg, back Thursday....? Think about it later.

Suddenly it's 448pm already. Another sleep of little more than 3 hours today. I don't know how I survive.

Adrenalin. Excitement.

Writing.



CHAPTER 179

MARIA

No way I can travel now.

Still no attempt from Katharina to reach out to me following my message that I would like to see her if she comes to my address in Berlin, just that happy smiling TikTok from two days ago. She is taking things slow, as she does not want to scare me off again I suppose. Or perhaps she never really intended ACTUALLY coming to Berlin, she was just petulantly trying to provoke me out of my long six months silence.

I don't mind. I am glad I renewed contact. I did the right thing and I feel so much happier for it. Happier too to know that — fucked up so royally without me there Monday night and made — angry.

Reading about dental abscesses and I am thinking it cannot be an abscess as abscesses are meant to be very painful and this is not, just a bit of discomfort and it just feels like a bruise if I press it. It is not a raging piercing pain that I feel all the time, which I think is an abscess symptom. Reading about the sockets left by a

removed tooth and that sounds more like what I am suffering from, as they say this can lead to pain and swelling while you wait for gum tissue and bone to regrow to fill the gap and this process can take weeks or months. This sounds to me closer to what I am experiencing which slightly reassures me. Already the swelling and bulge in my jawline is less than it was two days ago.

Re-added Imagine Dragons' 'Believer' to my phone this morning, that song Gloria danced to every time on that incredible night in the Black Eagle, and it now sounds so good again. I am leaning so much towards Nuremberg now. Nothing for Paris.

My redundancy can lead to ascendancy.

The good news about restoring contact with Katharina, good news about — fucking up, and good feeling about the job, has lifted my spirits. If I do get confirmation I am to stay then I will book a three night stay in Nuremberg to celebrate.

In fact I might even take a whole week off. Spend a night in Munich as well and Paris on the way out.

Just redownloaded 'Believer', the song Gloria danced to every time and it sounds so good.

Suddenly longing for Nuremberg again.

Just heard thunder and really heavy rain shower. Not heard rain like that for a long time.

YOU BROKE THEM SO BAD, THERAPISTS ARE NOW USING YOUR NAME AS A SYMPTOM 🚪📈 - JOKER SPEECH

Well, an extraordinary moment at Eden just after 9pm last night. Opened the gate for the Flat — chauffeur, then held open door for the little boy and the older boy who is just a friend of the children I think, unless he is a cousin or something, then saw Maria getting out of the car last but instead of going through the door she stopped on the step facing me and with a grin asked "How are you?" and shyly "So have you had a good day?" First time she has ever stopped to talk to me like this. She did not speak as she was going through the door, or stop half turned in the doorway, no, she refused to go through the open door at all but stood facing me face to face on the step with no attempt to go through the door. Her intention was fully on talking to me. We discussed my

attempts to sleep, and she asked in shock how I functioned with just three or three & a half hours sleep a day. “Like a zombie,” I said. “I can imagine!” she laughed and finally went in to join the two boys who were waiting for her. A breathtaking moment. Why does a teenage girl, 16?, stop to talk to a man like this? I think she has a crush on me, like the Peckham schoolgirl all those years ago.

It is funny because just half an hour earlier — had come in to where I sat, singing some song about “Young girl get out of my mind” or something like that, then we were talking about Adam Johnson, he made a joky reference to Graham Rix, I made reference to Maurice Chevalier's ‘Thank Heavens for Little Girls’, and then within half an hour this schoolgirl stops to make conversation with a shy grin on her face.

I cannot look so old and fat if I am still getting attention like this, surely? If Katharina still wants to see me? If I am agitating and exciting all these girls in the pubs on a weekly basis?



**NEXT WEEK—WHAT THE HELL IS THIS
POWER I HAVE SUDDENLY ACQUIRED?**

ENDNOTES

Your Editor Ernst Graf—A cultured man with a passion for opera & European pornography [Marquis de Yellow Pill / X](#) and [My Books](#)

DforDoom—Cult movies, classic movies, horror, cult tv of the 60s & 70s, vintage genre fiction [Classic Movie Ramblings](#) [Cult Movie Reviews](#) & [Vintage Pop Fictions](#) & [D4doome / X](#)

David Playfair—Two broken mirrors were connected by a tunnel through space and time, and a different part of me was at each end. [Meat Machine / X](#) [The Meat Machine: Amazon.co.uk](#)

Froutib— Man, 51, erotic art lover. Art is sublimation of life. Life is Art. I ❤️ the beauty of curves & sensuality of forms, without perversity  [Froutib / X](#)

Nick August—[Nick August—El tecolote/X](#) Substack: [Nick August](#)

MT White—MT White started as a comic book artist but only ever published as a novelist and essayist. He's written about film, culture, mixed martial arts & pro wrestling for assorted online outlets. He now considers himself a moraliste (in the French sense not a "moralist" in the English sense). Funny enough, he's never been to France. One might like to buy his controversial book [Content](#). Substack [Discursions](#)

Dick Saint Cécile—Author of stories about smartmachin, most often erotic. A novel in AE on Amazon: *The Flesh Remembers*. Ongoing projects in search of beta lect. [Dick Sainte Cecile / X](#) [A deux doigts du clavier](#)

Thomasphotoworks—Photographer in the Tampabay area [Thomasnudefoto](#)

Just Lisa—Promoting the wisdom of individual human freedom and personal responsibility through productive, voluntary relationships [Just Lisa](#)

Charlie Winkle aka 'Savage Winkle'—"A feast is made for laughter, And wine makes merry; But money answers everything." Ecclesiastes 10:19 NKJV [Winkle. / X](#) and [The Winkle Hour](#)

COVER PHOTO: Just Lisa by Thomasphotoworks

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Marquis de X—sigma male (bohemian ba... @erns... · Nov 11, 2022  ...

When a woman sees a man slowly pulling his sleeves up to reveal his bare forearms it immediately reminds her of a big penis.

Discuss.

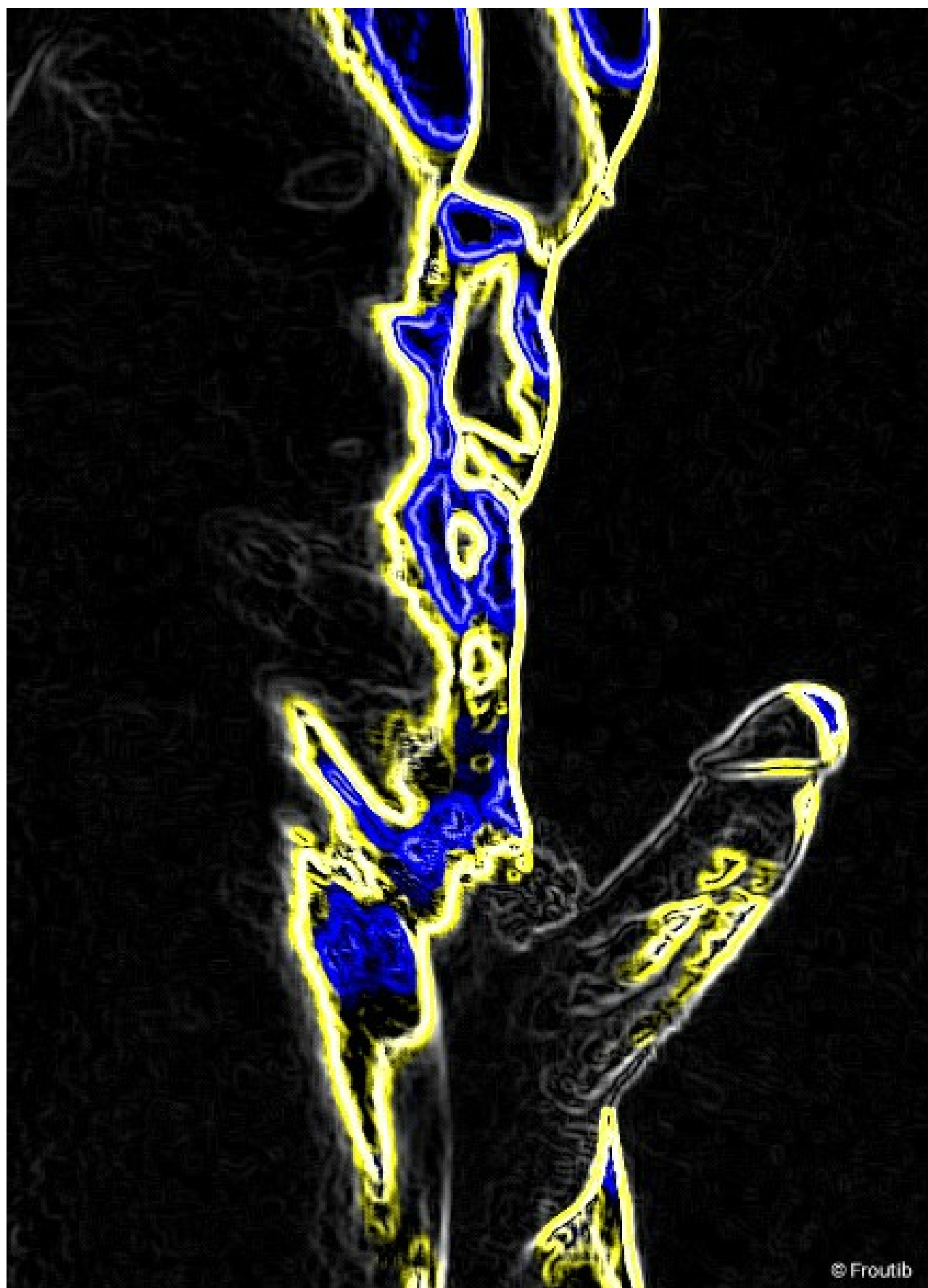
YES YOU ARE RIGHT

71.4%

NO

28.6%

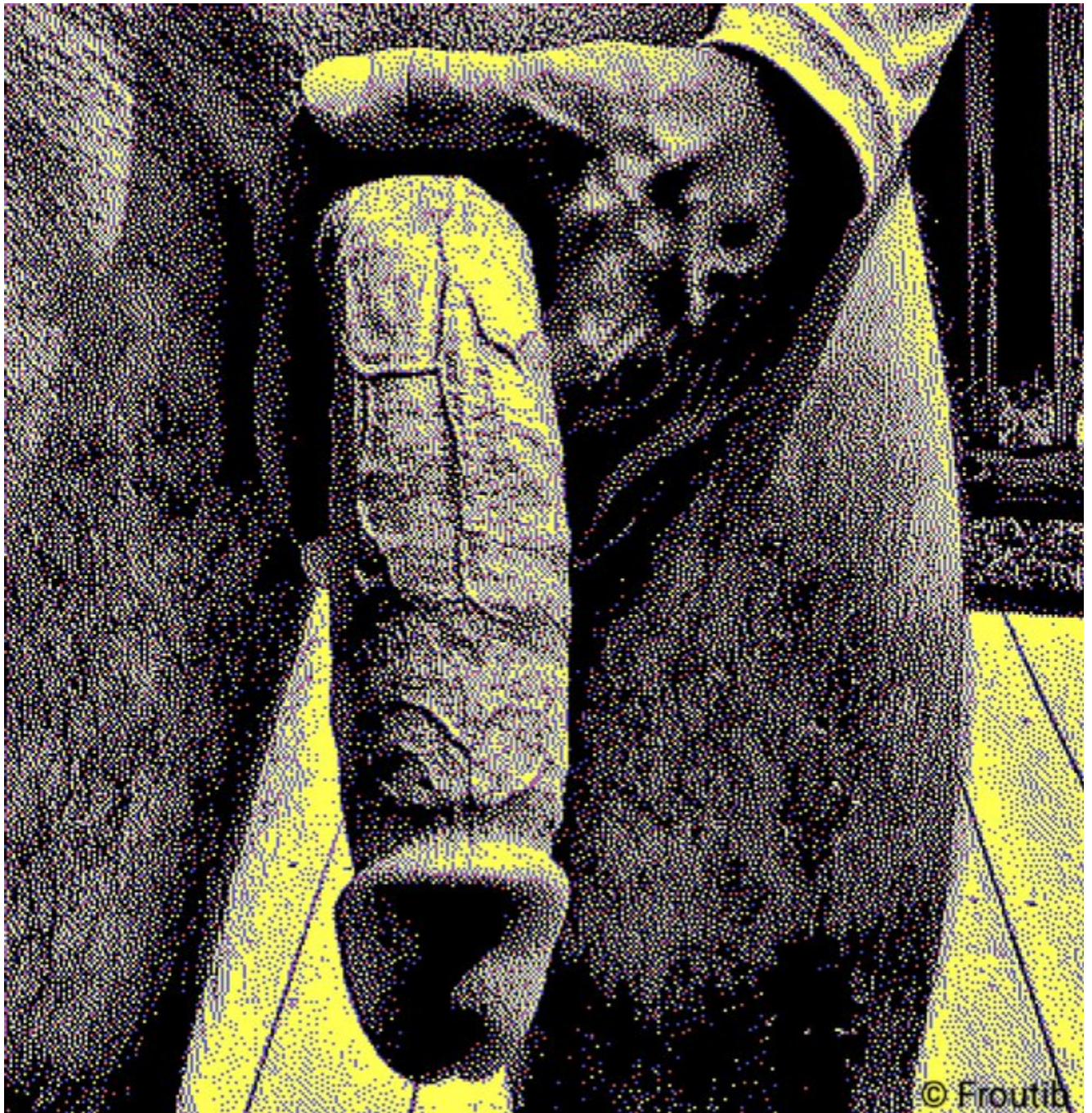
14 votes · Final results



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