

## TITLE\_NAME

Nuke's head pounded, and he wandered. He wondered how long it would be until his soul would stop forsaking him. He wished to return to a state of rest, but his mind rocked unsteadily. Fog grabbed him deeper with each passing day, and the summer's heat made the incineration of soul unbearable. The air became a liquid haze of heat which broke him down into a mean and near-bestial emptiness of mind.

The sole higher instinct left to Nuke was his curiosity. It drove him on from empty classroom to empty classroom, even as the ringing bell of the school's departure alarm drove his classmates out by the cattle-herd to the outside world of freedom. Instead of water, he found chalkdust falling to the floors and overflowing the desks. Pollen shifted in every beam of light and scratched at the insides of his nostrils. On every shelf he knew dust, and through dust he walked until his feet became that of a wandering pariah's.

God's absence was felt in all of the reading rooms. Each book, lifted and inspected by the boy's black pupils, became a call for freedom in an unguided world. A workbook on French grammar lifted from the inside of an open gym locker became a manual on the inculcation of meaning into world that had never been swept by an angel's touch. Labels on doors which ordered him to push and not pull became existential commands, ordering him to accept and account for the way of things or else be made yet more dreary by minor pain.

Glasnost he wished for, and as the light died out Nuke wandered in the godless world. Lofty and Lily continued to fuck and rut in the abandoned classroom, and he wondered at the loudness of their actions. Comfort or discomfort, which of the two was it that governed the pair's actions? They became as if they were rocking chairs or heating elements. Nuke thought of the furnace that roared too-loud in his basement when he was a child half formed and already aware of evil.

If it were good that came after evil, then why did the cold follow the heat? Though the boy hid himself from the purity of sun by staying in the stone of the building, the scorches of summer could not be escaped. The white of his skin blanched into fever, and chills broke from the surface of skin and rippled inward to meet his guts. He retched. Brown bile dripped from his cheek. Then, Nuke coughed the meat of his lungs out onto the floor and lay sprawling.

Lily and Lofty continued to groan, now quieter, but Nuke's voice did not even disturb the air in comparison to their vocalizations. Where had Nuke's life gone? How did the data-structure of mind grind into a feeble and mechanical index thrown onto a floor like so many index card? He had priding himself on his mind, yet his mind could not even summon his larynx to save himself or to recruit help. Helpless, the boy lay, and the posters upon the walls weaved into a tapestry.

Fucking. If he could stop that fucking. For a moment Nuke held a resentment against lovers for making their voices curl in high, ecstatic pitches while he could not summon a tongue-twitch. Yet, he had to, had to-

He sneezed.

The sun was too bright. What had he been thinking about? The fucking, yes, the fucking. If he modeled the school as a superfluid, then the coupling may have been akin to a Cooper pair in a superconducting sea. Suppose he imagined the school as an aquarium bathed in mauve (or would it be transparent) liquid helium, boiloff like jellyfish arms rising from the halls. If the self-interaction of a helium sea was destroyed by heat, then, why, the passion of the lovers made its own cool. Or, perhaps it was not passion that created cool, but instead cool was the necessary precondition for passion.

Nuke did not know, but in his heart he believed that the coolness of the outside world was a necessary condition for love to arise. That stability was begotten only by stability, unless it was the stability of a heat-death and the nihilistic variant of stasis brought by disorder and death.

A girl from the outside world that was beautiful and unclean. A woman of faith to match his deadness. He was sad that he would never meet her again. Where was he? Where was his head? Down in his pants, obviously, where the seat of his thought rested, flaccid as usual.